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THE DRAMA THEATRE

Raymond Omodeo

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PLAYTEXT BY GREGORY BLANCHIN
RICCARDO BENEDETTI INTERVIEWS
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AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL THEATRE MAGAZINE

Aug Sept 1976

EDITORS: Bruce Knappett Robert Page

Art: Lucy Wagner

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Editorial

THEATRE AUSTRALIA, the first national monthly theatre magazine to be published in Australia, has been launched to answer an urgent and ever growing need for comprehensive comment and informed criticism. The magazine is broadly based and will be of interest to a wide range of people, theatre goers, theatre practitioners, amateur players, students, educationalists and theatre critics, film and television enthusiasts and indeed anyone concerned for the development of the arts in Australia.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA gives a national listing of professional productions, sound criticism of last month's productions and in depth articles on current concerns. The magazine also contains itself with the latest education, new technical trends and reviews from theatre books. Theatre goes appear in Quotes and Queries and writers abroad give a round up of trends in their country for the later national section. A Carousel series will read out the production process of selected plays and in the Film Television and Radio drama section criticism will be going strong behind the scenes analysis.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA exists solely on sales. Without the general support of the theatre the magazine would not exist. Our special thanks go to the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Nimrod Theatre Company and the Australian Performing Group for giving us their rights to secure a national listing, and to Sydney's Equity and the Theatrical and Amusement Employees Association for practical help and support. THEATRE AUSTRALIA now depends on your support if it is to continue its task of chronicling and consolidating our national theatre culture.

This month

This month we feature Raymond Greville's article on the Opera Theatre at the Opera House, a theatre which has never yet been critically examined in print by those who have worked on it. The play-text is the controversial *Ann* by Jennifer Rankin, and Anne Valby reveals the pressures and problems of being a wife and actress in a personal case view with director, Richard Wherrett.

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Note: Subscriptions fall due on July 1 of each year

Theatre Guide

NEW SOUTH WALES:

ACTORS COMPANY (080 3503)

Play of Agamemnon by Woody Allen
Directed by Robert Delaney (to Sept. 18th)
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett
Directed by Robert Delaney (from Sept. 22nd)

BONDI PAVILION (30 7241)

Some Difference by Morris Swaden
Directed by John Demuth (July 26th - Aug 21st)

CAPITOL THEATRE (212 4186)

Agnes Christ Superstar Rose/Wedder
Directed by Helen Haeg
Choreographed by Christod Koller
(continuing)

ENSEMBLE (929 887)

Comedians by David Griffin
Directed by Mary Gordon (continuing)

HER MAJESTY'S (212 1066)

Man of La Mancha
Directed by Betty Foulster (no dates available)

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, NEWCASTLE (26 2626)

Bedfellows by Barry Cokley
Directed by Michael Potts (from Aug 6th)
A House and Holy Ghosts by John O'Donoghue
Directed by Terence Clark (Premiere 10th Sept)

INDEPENDENT (929 7377)

The Shifting West by Richard Heyman
Directed by David Goodford

MARIAN STREET (488 3188)

Cold (Cole Porter)
Directed by Alexander Duncan
Choreographed by Karen Johnson (to Aug 21st)

In Praise of Love by Terence Rattigan
Directed by Martin Benson (from Aug 28th - Oct 2nd)

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8232)

The Heart of Belgrave Square by Stanley Walsh
Directed by Stanley Walsh (continuing)

NIMROD (09 5003)

Upstart: The Resounding Officer by George Farquhar
Directed by Ben Harter (to Sept 25th)

Downstart: The Election of Benjamin Franklin by Steve J. Spence
Directed by Richard Wheaton (from Aug 26th)

OLD TOTE (663 6122)

Drums Thence: The Steamers' Wedding by Thomas Dekker
Directed by Peter Collingwood (to Sept. 7th)
The Duke Moore by Henrik Ibsen (from Sept 15th)
Parade Thence: Coleridge Engaged by Simon Gray (to Sept 21st)

O THEATRE (92 5011)

Joan by Alan Coven
Directed by Adam Solov

THEATRE ROYAL

Black Theatre of Prague (Aug 23rd to Sept 4th)

Some Time Next Year by Morris Swaden
Directed by Gordon Hunt (from Sept 15th)

THE STABLES (31 1111)

Beer by Jennifer Rafter
Directed by Nigel Triffin (Premiere) (No dates available)

QUEENSLAND

HER MAJESTY'S

Black Theatre of Prague (from Sept 28th)

LA BOITE (38 2296)

What's Made Maudslows by Peter Wilson
Directed by Rick Salinghorst (Premiere) (To Aug 28th)

Happy Birthday Maude Jane by Kurt Vonnegut (from Sept 2nd)

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (21 3861)

The Experiment by David Williamson
Directed by Joe McCulloch (to Sept 4th)

A Forest in Mind by Jack Hibbert
Directed by Alan Edwards (from Sept 15th)

TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE (52 5889)

Deadly Doll by A.W. Pinero
Directed by Joan Whalley (no dates available)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HER MAJESTY'S

Black Theatre of Prague (from Sept 28th)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (51 5151)

Main Barbara by G.B. Shaw
Directed by George Ogilvie (to Sept 11th)

The Last of the Knavelemen by John Posner
Directed by David W. Barnum (from Sept 15th)

VICTORIA

COMEDY

Some Time Next Year by Morris Swaden
Directed by Gordon Hunt (to Sept 11th)

Black Theatre of Prague (from Sept 15th)

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (845 1100)

Russell Street Orbits by W. Shakespeare
Directed by John Surtees (to Aug 21st)

A Handful of Friends by David Williamson
Directed by Rodney Fisher (no dates available)

St. Martin: Some of My Best Friends are Women by L.M. Rado
Directed by Ray Lawler (to Sept 14th)

The Nurse by Elizabeth Madox
Directed by Ian Glen (no dates available)

Green Street: The Pausanias by E.A. Whitford
Directed by Simon Hugginson (to Aug 21st)

Every of a Madman by Nikolai Gogol
Directed by Andrew Potts (from Aug 26th)

On Tour: Air Studies by Ray Lawler
Directed by John Surtees (Military, Sea, Midure - Aug 23rd to Sept 8th)

PRAM FACTORY (347 7133)

AC/DC by Heathcote Williams
Directed by Lynette Smith (continuing)

Knuckle by David Hare
Directed by Alan Robinson (to Sept 11th)

The Overcoat by Jack Hibbert
Directed by Tim Robinson (no dates available)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (81 2403)

The Trial and Accused by Peter Aspinall and Directed by Malcolm Keith (from Aug 8th)

The Ride Across Lake Cremona by Peter Handke
Directed by Sally Holmes (Sept 15th - 18th)

PLAYHOUSE (26 3344)

Melons Copeys by Alan Bennett
Directed by Anne Mann (to Sept 4th)

AUGUST 1976 SEPTEMBER

QUOTES

11Renewal of some of J.C.W.'s operations is now inevitable because of the government decision to reject our short term application to the F.A.C. We are very disappointed and will be making the detailed case in the light of this at our August 1978 meeting. The following is a serious concern about the report on the work, dated 1st November is published **12**
Maxwell Mitchell, Managing Director of J.C.W. Williams

13The change in life-style involved in shifting over from being a full time leader to being a full time writer about the old psyche is a lot. I really liked the experience of directing *Camelot* for the A.P.G. in 1973 and very often I get to involve myself in close daily contact, to relate to a group of people, by directing I jump at its situation from by eye. And I've always loved the play — its bloody good **14**

Daved Williamson, playwright, who is directing John Howard, Last of the Knucklemen for the South Australian Theatre Company in September

15The *Statler's* is getting a lot of good critic, a lot of good audiences, is being nicely hand out, and should move out next March. Lunchtime and six o'clock were a good fifty-five in the ramp shows a disappointing success, and original Australian tradition. Eight o'clock shows, evenly divided between *Statler's* and *Statler's* (*Green Under and The Gift*) and *Statler's* (*Tony Wollins and dead*) We are still in business but deeply bruised by colour TV and the twenty four hour live professional theatres still broadly functioning round Sydney **16**Bob Biss and Anna Brookbank, owners of The Statler

17Madame Father's normal directing load whilst Managing Director for the South Australian Theatre Company was two plays per season — and that's just as many as he is doing when he returns to us as a free lance and coach. Responsibilities of administration will be replaced with those of the writer-director involving with the *Statler's* and *Statler's*, a documented history of the Unkneeling Australian Committee in the 60s and 70s — how the Theatre Co-Operated programme which takes performance out into the Adelaide community, and the other with *Statler's* own season of the *Statler's* play — a shorter and more accessible version for the *Statler's* audience **18**

19The Playwrights' Conference is hoping to move into a second stage of operations after four National Conferences. This stage may take the form of assistance with readings and short productions of new plays throughout the year, and is aimed at giving continual encouragement to Australian playwrights, with the Conference as the focal point **20**
Walter van der Pijpen, Australian National Playwrights' Conference

21Roger Chapman, one of England's leading T.E. experts has recently joined S.A.T.C. as Director of Youth Activities from Monday August 1st. He is not only working with the performing for children as well as holding special workshops for teachers of creative drama for primary schools. He has replaced Arthur Bawn, S.A.T.C. **22**

23At Perth was London, Brisbane would be there **24**

from the QOC Newsletter

AND

25Look forward to returning to freelance directing and acting. Since it became generally known that I was leaving (in November) I have been constantly questioned about the Tate by people whose only interest has been what directing talent I might have to sell. They might as well have been in my association with the Company has been a happy one. Of course we have had our disagreements — generally about the type of play to be done — but they have been healthy and necessary ones. There is something to be said again in my job worth doing, many of the things I have wanted to do haven't materialised and these frustrations are due to financial not personal obstructions well believe I may have paved the way to their resolution in the future.

Some time to live in Australia, accepting its work and all, and continue to learn. I am always receiving. I have no intention of leaving. I love working with the actors here and would stay for this reason alone **26**

27Bill Redmond, Artistic Director Old Tate Theatre Company. Bill Redmond will be looking at the new forward for Australian Theatre in the next issue **28**

29Prior to Robin Loompy's resignation in September 1974 from the position of Artistic Director of the Old Tate Theatre Company the company had a policy of retaining as many artistic director plus resident directors on either one or two year contracts.

When the time came to appoint a successor to Robin Loompy the company's directors decided that the policy used for the resident directors should be adopted in relation to the post of Artistic Director. The problem was that the company was not in a position to appoint a further extension of appointment.

This was implemented upon the appointment of William Redmond whose two year term of office expired in November 1976. By agreement with his predecessor it was felt that the company would be better able to meet the changing conditions that the theatrical profession might have to face. It would be possible to introduce new ideas and new directors much more quickly should these be necessary. The question of continuity after the company's artistic director was also estimated deeply and it was decided that by stepping the appointment of the artistic director and the resident directors, suitable overlaps would occur that would maintain a cohesive policy. A supplementary development the company is contemplating in the near future is the introduction of another form of contractual directorship. The company anticipates being able to form a commitment with local and overseas directors on a rotating basis. It is hoped that by introducing a twelve month contract period with term in four years we would be able to enter directors to form a relationship with the company they will be both establishing and existing for artists and the theatre going public. In the latter case, the company would be able to maintain them for a full twelve month or two year period which would remove them completely from the sphere of operations in which they work in either Europe or America.

The method is new to Australia in the drama field though customary in the fields of opera, ballet and orchestral work as the custom has been for the long time appointment of an artistic director but a fall that the innovation is worth consideration if it means a more interesting and stable form of progression for our audiences and the expansion of the skills of our artists by the introduction of new thinking and the latest methods in set designs **30**

Ken Fourqurean, General Manager of the Old Tate Theatre Company

How does the situation arise where live theatre and the Australian Open are starting to run short of funds — no increases many cutbacks and consequent threat of partial or complete closure — when the Film and TV Board of the Australian Council can still, it would seem, guarantee much more and even launch out on new projects? Winifred Luan Harker's transfer from Mairiad to Redding Town Hall Arts Centre to establish an arts centre entirely (and substantially) funded by the Film and TV Board is the answer. Winifred Luan Harker, who has a show a night in emphasis with the current Government? Does history makers move affect more than the interest of one entrepreneur?

QUERIES

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Nimrod downstairs.

Would you believe **GORDON CHATER** in *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* by Steve J. Spears. He's fat, fifty and quite content with his Mick Jagger fantasies and his stockbroker mate till his 12 year old elocution pupil tries to seduce him and the forces of light descend on the Transvestite Terror of Double Bay. Director is Richard Wherrett, designer Larry Eastwood and it opens August 26th.



Nimrod upstairs.

A big, lively production of George Farquhar's very modern late Restoration piece about wenching, war, women's roles, whooring and recruiting - *The Recruiting Officer*. It's warm and witty and the first play ever performed in Australia - in 1789 by convicts "in a rude hut fitted up for the occasion". The all star cast includes **PETER CARROLL** (*The Christian Brothers* and *Benedick* in *Much Ado*) **IVAR KANTS** (*The Duke* in *Much Ado* and the Lavinia's brother in *Mourning Becomes Electra*), **LYNETTE CURRAN** (*Martello Tower*), **CAROL BURNS** (*The Matchmaker*) and **JOHN GADEN** (*Threepenny*). Director is Ken Hoeller and it plays until September 25th.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER



Reviews

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP

AC/DC

John Smythe

AC/DC to Richard Williams, Director, London Group, Member, RICHARD MURPHY, Director, P.M. (Melbourne), John CARO, Director, New Labour, MELBOURNE, JANE, Director.

"Give it a bit a hammer and suddenly everything finds hammering."

That is and clamps your mean-looking brain-
burst receptors on that one. Because it is
one of the very few unreminded non-memo-
rised statements uttered in by the triple
reality multi-track, not one digital of the three
Banks, as a play called AC/DC which was
written by Richard Williams in the late
1960s first produced at the Royal Court
Theatre London in 1970 and is now touring in
on Australia for the first time having been
programmed by the Australian Performing
Group (beginning July at the Power Factory
where final output rights in two striking the
back part of the front theatre (AC) and the back
theatre (DC) — which when you make the
theatre of the front (about 10) must mean the
Project is waiting for good on the off
manipulated clips which is probably neither
here nor there but if it gives you a better and you
want to pick up on that, say more than do I like
you know whether to tell you on right but they
cool day and don't waste things don't blow a
trip there is so much around to get into.

AC/DC is a powerful, powerful, high
frequency, sometimes magnetic, sometimes
shocking, even in sitting constantly spinning
theatrical change effect seats and picks up on
phenomena that seem digitally cutting or at
least come into sharp focus, around the once it
was written References to the Beatles and
Kennedy date is a bit but although we might
not be so readily taken nowadays with old
rock starbe light and super amplified sound
shows as once we were much of what
remains more than half a decade later to very
much the same and more so.

The kids who have got hold of electronic
media technology and more importantly, the

power source controllers who have got hold of
them and are not holding one bit, continue to
hammer relentlessly at our already flattened
and dulled sensibilities. The multi-million
magical mass pulsations. Purveyors for profits of
prophecy of bigger and better brain-blasting
experiences. Proliferating and proliferating in
control, run, control, top gun, mythic
analysis and therapy too, speed, speed, speed,
the supernatural, territorial. Their really
packaged reality flashes — go, loaded, optical
releases, releases, popped in somewhere
between anti-social comedy shows, political
whitewash cartoons and the latest sports
revels — serve largely to attract us to their
seductions. Williams calls them, psych
oplayers.

All this has created a bizarre sub-culture
where being a freak is a strategy for survival.
Sadie (Carol Porter) needs to keep spaced out
as she can forget all the atrocities (eg. South
Africa). She is into anything and everything if it
promises something new. Since she believes
that no emotion is worth having twice, she is a
relentless upward one-way search for
ultimate, pure sensation. Melody (Jane Caro) and
Gary (Larry Melrose) seem to be the kids of
the past. Sadie (the grasping, with look at
strategy looking for dynamic space since to this
day she is a happy to get happy to get happy
getting a blast from an amusement ride) —
until Sadie breaks the three-way built by
being in on Maurice the maintenance
mechanic's idea. Theoretical, alienated out of
their orbit. Melody and Gary leave. They
don't make it from AC to DC.

Maurice (Richard Murphy), among other
things, considers (pretended) people
stealing his electricity. He used to have a
physical relationship with a girl called Perovna
(Philip Melrose), but now they are totally
into each other's heads. Perovna's body is
tightly sensory overload. Maurice seems
dependent on Perovna and seems to want to
make Perovna dependent on him.

In DC, Sadie sets out to help Perovna
blowing god out of Maurice (smashing inter-
personal hyper-sphere of her by the actions
he had a Chris Complex, he says she followed
him out of the quest for a completely new
life only that no one else I be able to copy or
duplicate — goes into its final phase. She
performing a (preparing) operation on Perovna
in, bends a hole in the back of his skull.



Carol Porter (Sadie) in A.P.G.'s AC/DC

Apparently Asians, Czechs, miners, Dutch and
Gleeks, used to do it to relieve pressure on the
brain or release self-control in Sadie's hands it
is this liberating round trip.

It is an astonishing play. And this production of
it (directed by Ursula Smith) is intelligent,
dynamic, committed and thorough. Very few
audience members could become
empathetically involved but that is as it should
be. It would be hypocritical for it to send back
as well. Nevertheless, we do get bombarded
a lot with technical technological jargon and
scientific references. The positions have made
sense of it all for themselves is a great
achievement. No doubt that raises our
collective tolerance level well above where it
might have been. But some observers will still
fail to make much contact at all. Others might
pick up on so much so fast that they too will
start performing for the moment of a part of
scen and pick up on too late and there
question is the time that can be achieved in
one sitting, and I will trust, from the great detail
entirely on that only.

But remember, better late, whatever way it
goes for individual audience members, the
APG must be congratulated for taking the risk
and fulfilling their part of the triple act well.



Richard Murphy (Maurice), Carol Porter (Sadie), Larry Melrose (Gary) and Jane Caro (Melody) in A.P.G.'s AC/DC

Michael Edgley

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George Bernard Shaw

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John Powers

THE LAST OF THE KNUCKLEMEN

Directed by David Williamson
September 16 - October 9



Paul Zindel

AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE

Directed by George Ogilvie
October 14 - November 6



MALFI

an adaptation of Webster's
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Directed by Rodney Fisher
November 11 - November 27



Michael Cove

HAPPY LANDINGS

Directed by George Ogilvie
December 2 - December 18

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Alan Edwards (Alan Wool) and Peter Kewitt (Carlos Eggereds) in QTC's *Savages*

deviant and obsessive behaviour to turn *Savages* into a poor imitation of *Equus*.

For the play with all its faults is still gutsy stuff with occasional gems of observation and argument. Carlos's argument, which opens the window I alluded to earlier and allows us to escape from the boundaries of tragedy, is one such gem.

As your literal hearts bleed at the thought of these poor naked savages fading away, but it never begins to dribble across your apathy for a mind that half a million children under five starved to death in Brazil last year.

Best thing? It's a devastating statement but the QTC puts it in another context. *Savages* treats most of Carlos's pronouncements with contemptuous disregard interspersed with witless foot shuffling and tugging at his handkerchiefs — a level of communication more appropriate to the Art of Course. Acting this to an intellectual exchange of ideas. Add to this a portrayal of Carlos as a fairly innocent, naive and unassuming youth who becomes increasingly when challenged on a point of political dogma, and a general tendency by all the actors to seek an emotional sedition by grunts and odd reflexions, and we end up with

a production where the characters are not entirely realistic — for *Savages* has an unfortunate tendency to say things that are true — but unrealistic where every statement has a subjective rather than objective meaning. *West* alone comes across as relatively 'neutral' and it allows for point of view — others, small-minded, and incapable of action — to become the sorts of the play.

The next step in the process of dehistoricisation is the choice of a naturalistic medium of presentation which is utterly proud to be people they know nothing about. It made possible the one moment in the production which is deeply offensive to any intelligent human being: a moment in the scene where *West* asks the American missionary and monks: 'real' dehistoricised before. For most of the play the Indians are names and identity. But in this scene he results to any oppressed person shuffles on to the stage, and indulges in a series of self-humiliation. My black friends found this most offensive and deeply insulting. Not more than a mile from the QTC Theatre the members of their oppressed race who could be (and have been) by either (because complicity in the past) called upon to play these roles. The production would

then have taken on a party showing in a male style that still suffering real opportunities taken place now, today, in Brazil — and in Australia.

The parallel is not metaphorical but real. What the multi-racialists found in the Amazon was because. The companies involved are *Alone Rio*, *Tina*, *Don* and *Karin* the *Correio* (patroned and edited) part of *Shell Oil*. Exactly the same three companies the Queensland government has allowed to mine bauxite in Cape York Peninsula where the Mission aborigines were killed off their land and their houses burnt, where *Wings* was desecrated and the blacks turned into dispossessed fringe dwellers, and where the Australian community now reads interestingly enough. *Widow* the major partner in *Australian Association*, was mining in in Brazil in 1983 — in the same area and in the same year that the bombing massacre took place. It now has prospecting rights in the Indian Reserves where the survivors were to in 1972 gunmen were hired (by whom is unknown) to massacre the rest of the tribe.

Really then, is what the Queensland politicians, public servants, and capitalists in the opening night and moved to be protected from and the QTC rose successfully to the challenge.

even attempt an academically meaningful doubling although there were some nice gratuitous ones. Toward Harriet in the Chateau, the Player King and Fortinbras for instance. I also liked (even less so) steady and thoughtful Horatio (he never looked as though the part could have as well been played by a well-mannered Labrador dog) and a nicely paired Ophelia by Barbara Flanagan.

the last of a series of books and interpretive programs remain in the mind. While passing his right eye, look into Ophelia's hands at the end of the ceremony. There, her hands, which have been playing a higher colored short part, fall face down into an altar and a pretty girl—hence, Ophelia can not resist, and she has the blood-splattered corpse. Her face, a woman's, is the only suggestion of a woman's face in the scene. The girl's face, a woman's, is the only suggestion of a woman's face in the scene. The girl's face, a woman's, is the only suggestion of a woman's face in the scene.

I could go on indefinitely recounting the details of this production, from the clear, thoughtful direction to the fine ensemble acting and even the spare cutting of the text (the slower pace of performance allowed less cutting than usual). But what finally matters as my tribute to an unforgettable evening is the theatre as that familiarity with the text that not one dull moment is so thorough, waiting for something exciting to happen... what happens in *Macbeth* was not the point — how it happened was so compelling and freshly cathartic, so visceral.

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OLD TOTE THEATRE COMPANY

HABEAS CORPUS

Katharina Brubaker

First-time Alan Bennett's *Habitus Corpus* currently a triumphant box office success in the Old Red Theatre Company — on Shaftesbury Avenue in 1972 when it was proving the hat of the tourist season with Sir Alec Guinness in the lead. I cannot remember much about it now, but I do remember the argument that followed on the footpath outside about whether the play was a triumph of British comedy style or whether it was just ridiculous.

Alan Seymour had taken me to see the play. He had gone to some trouble to book tickets at advance because he felt that such an elegantly executed portrayal of middle-class Jewish living was vital to my education. Howard Barker's essay in anarchy – transformation *Apocalypse Now* (remember he put up at the left). David Williamson and his wife were also there – we had all come to London for the opening of the *Shogakukan* in 1978. David's first was to London and he was feeling he had been 'gagged by the West End media'.

"They don't call me naive," he said simply referring to his recent press reception. "That's the most undergraduate subject I have ever heard." He was right all those from the Australian angle David is of our playwrights the most generous of all to his audience.

1. Feeling motherly from the distance of London, visiting from the 60s, I tried hard to explain the rage against the audience of which we had just been part. The great pleasure for me — and for David now too — as a tourist, is to observe such an audience and a silverworld absolute in complete control.

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Bennett's play is a jolly romp of Gilbert and Sullivan — come out! into the permissive society as Ben Bawley has reports with his success. The *Did Before* (Mattersey, Husband and wife can about in all directions before seriously reporting business life, to the marriage bed. The apolitical dreams of income and life insurance and a happy life for grants them both: the son's success in law hangs on his having a fatal disaster and in a final discovery scene the posthumous widow of the Colonel Bennett finds the lost father of her child — the product of a chance encounter in an air raid.

Over all premises Mrs Bennett, the ubiquitous cleaning lady, a venerable Rick in the purple of the Home Counties.

Getting back to Allen Seymour, the was much taken with Dr Arthur Wilkinsted's put down of his son.

Arthur: Trevor?

Replies: I thought his name was Dennis.

Arthur: Then I'm sure you're right.

The becomes a running gag on about the comment. I suppose this is what is known as the permissive society, which accompanies each compromising situation.

The Dennis joke was naturally enough inescapable to David Williamson. Only someone who had lived in Britain, said Allen, could see what a significant definition the loss of generations of middle class parents, loathing of their children. I putted.

But despite its huge success with the four of us, a determination to be very much an angle of the thought about these men and Bennett is only has a peculiar voyeur quality present at an innocent comedy — undergraduate interest, as Williamson said. This

Bruce Berry (Mickwest) and Dennis Oke (Fidelity) in *The Old Tate's*



Keith Lee (Sir Percy Shortley), Bruce Berry (Mickwest) and Dennis Oke (Fidelity) in *The Old Tate's* Helmut Gelpi

one of those plays about how Mother Britain has gone over the hill without having any fun on the way. Every character is obscure, has been obliterated by the loss of life but death was, business and respectability. Is Bennett saying that it is not the decline of the British Empire but the decline of the British Empire has made Britain a second class nation?

By that as it may, against my program at the Helmut Gelpi has arrived in Sydney in the *Parade*. The show and not only has been playing to capacity houses there but will transfer on July 25 to the Theatre Royal. At present there is no sign of its box office producing nothing, but they don't laugh much in the Dennis joke.

It is an extravagant race around production by Alexander Hay with a Luna Park kind of set by Jane Hopley and a first-rate cast. Bruce Berry plays Arthur Wilkinsted with a smooth elegance, looking unconvincingly like the middle-aged son of the Old Tate. Robert Quinlan. As his wife Dorothy Vernon is a really comic partner in splendidly English-style. Roger Bowring is the cheeky son who gets the great pleasure and his father is the very model of a modern major failure. Owen Flanagan as Mrs Bennett and Ruth Crandall as the housekeeper, Constance and indeed Russell felt as the repeated comedian. Carol Threlking and Judi Parr as the formidable widow. Lady Bawley, play comically roles they have been playing all their professional lives. In them are added Keith Lee as the head of the BMA, Gordon McCullagh as a later beyond salesman, Dennis Oke as a male virgin and Rob Dallas as a succubus.

It was very enjoyable and as inescapable in direction to me here as it was in London. I putted over its success. Much of it is in its theatricality. The average audience here is to see the remnants of theatre to be required to use their imagination to recognize as with the *Major General in the Powder of Porcelain* that he is doing nothing great skill at being an artist and doing so. It is demonstrative theatre, like the *Parade* in *Clare* which makes the play a footnote to

whereas it is performed. What subtlety of total control a play may have — as indeed David Williamson discovered that time with *Macbeth* — is lost if inevitably in the sea change forced upon it be success. What we have here in *Helmut Gelpi* is a harmless poking of fun at the clothes of British society making the same point that are always made at a theatrical, comic matter. But the idea has undoubtedly found its right home with the Old Tate's, which hardly middle class and largely middle-aged audience. And that is the secret of success. How many of us have watched those British hung up too?

The *Old Tate's* has had a remarkable good year in the box office and in the offices of its present artistic director, Bill Redmond, who regrettably is leaving that post in November. He will still be working with the company as a free lance director. Mr Redmond was appointed accordingly to the board, for his knowledge of the commercial theatre in Britain, it being seen pragmatically that the *Parade*, Theatre at the Opera House was inevitably a failure for reasons. Inheriting a programme from his predecessor, it has made the same mistake as the public policy in and it seems something of a disaster that the Tate is to leave here just when he is at least showing us what he can do. Whether the Tate should be run on such commercial terms is a question for the public and the Australian Council but certainly success within those walls has always been equated with the seats sold rather than the quality achieved. Sydney has almost no legitimate commercial theatre these days, now that J. C. Williamson has almost shut up shop and the *Old Tate's* is taking the desert. And good luck too. Despite the cut backs from the time since the Tate is looking better than it has for years. Who will accept the fact that it is now the question. One number is that it will be nobody but that those who really pull the strings in that institution at a point will come out from this showmen's hand. What will the Tate board stop cutting off its nose to spite its face? It has more knowledge and the best out of its employees.

NIMROD UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS

MAD BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN?

Rex Cramphorn

MAD BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW by Rex Cramphorn
New York: Random House, 1994
\$24.95 (hbk)

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN? by Rex Cramphorn
New York: Random House, 1994
\$24.95 (hbk)

Nimrod is currently making a detailed but two-sided attack on the conventional notion of what constitutes an evening in the theatre. One transcript, *Downstairs*, follows Upstairs and invasion of fictional characters' bedrooms. The other is intended as a coherent review of either production, but rather as a series of thoughts, and questions related to what they have in common.

Of course, the court case drama and the one man show have been with us for some time, but rarely with such atmospheric effect as the allusion that the questions aimed unqualified dependence on the interest of the material. For both *Are you now or have you ever been?* and *Mad Bad and Dangerous to Know* draw their material from real life and seek to present the people who lived it without much in the way of translation into what we know as dramatic form — an aim which may be characterised loosely as documentary rather than fictional. In the former we are shown a range of real people reacting to a challenging situation; in the latter we are shown a single individual reacting to life in general. In both cases these actual human beings are presented for our consideration as art.

Without ability or desire to pursue that into semantic or aesthetic theory, it's just like to note practical consequences. The first Berkeley abridgement from records of the House Un-American Activities Committee has the advantage of a one if room situation, which is generally expanded to fit dramatic. In Rex Cramphorn's production, actors play some twenty-five real people, as people, politicians, investigators, committee members and the show-business victims of the investigation. Now Mr. Bentley has chosen a nice range of people and situations to the committee's detriment, together with some linking material

in the form of a voice over. Rex Horst has also adapted the voice over as a short leader and equipped her with a large scorecard which provides a neat visual representation of each item as to black-list or to white wash. It's in the area of the propriety of these eight actors representing those twenty-five real people in that theatrical situation that my interest about *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?* developed. First of all, is what actor is the actor playing the real person? Is Drew Forsythe playing in his presentation of someone's interview because he has studied tape recording of the trial and studied the voice? When I asked Rex Horst he explained that vocal interpretations come from the material itself as well as from research. But where does it stop? Is the real he is wearing copied photographs? He has made up to look like that person? For the actor to wear SD-style suits, the microphone in front of him to look like the real SD's article and the space has a vaguely court-like feel although the cheer-leader (Peth Bishop) is being whom and matching girl (Marilyn) keeps the whole thing in a more naturalistic context. The fact that Drew Forsythe is also playing three other real people complicates the problem but does not change it — even if there were an actor for each real person the question of degree of realism would remain.

So far it's only an artistic question when you're playing a real person how far should you go in the language of representation? Is there any one response would be that it's a case for detailed memory, far beyond a rough idea of outline and voice or nothing at all. But nothing at all would mean not even an American accent, and we're far too far from the reality of American voices to accept material with American reference in

American voices. And that question comes into a wider frame of reference: how do we do an American play in Australia? Perhaps we can accept that an adopted Australian version of an American voice is a theatrical mask, a conventional representation that affects to something without reproducing it.

To leave the representation question for a moment, there is also a moral one. No one can doubt that what the first shows — presentation because of a political opinion — makes a variety of dramatics, the argument of the victims of the investigation, forced to shape between the official voice of democracy and their own understanding of a spring clearly from the material they were trapped in a situation in which they couldn't win — appearing either as communal sympathisers or foot-patrols and either way intimidated and tamed. But what is our position as an audience now? We admit those who stuck it out, including the 19th Amendment doggerel, and applaud those who gave in and betrayed their friends, whether both halves of self-interest or genuine conviction that it was the right thing to do. We tick off goodies and baddies on the scorecard of a change in historical perspective. We then are told probably most of them still alive. For me, then the play has found the quality of a social generation with that — who among these real people cannot walk who fairly? which in fact the situation itself was the end. I'm not suggesting that this last point is not clear in the *Are You Now* — but simply that the other, fully keeping one's word, is more loudly. The shaping towards this music in Rex Bentley's selection, but I think the choice to realise the score (baser and more) the production in the direction of impersonation than compound the problem.

John Bell as Byron. Photo by Peter Westerman





Barry Otto, Martin Harris, Alan Becker and Robert David in *Am I Not a Man or Have You Ever Been?* Photographer, Mike Goldsme

Am I saying then, that the production would have been better mostly or artistically without character voices without period clothes, without vivid and interesting performance like for example Robert David's Alan Burrows? Certainly a part of the evening's interest seems to be in the abilities of the actors to give individual differentiating qualities to each of the people they represent. And certainly it would be for the same reason to insist on confining the audience's attention to the material itself as the expense of the theatricalisation, which can give it the very shape and aesthetics that it may need. But how would the real Alan Burrows feel if he were in the audience? In a parallel between the father in *Paradise Is for Characters* in *Striptease* of an Author says:

however much of his art this performance puts into ascribing me into himself, however much he will do even if he makes himself up to look as much like me as he can, it will be difficult for it to be a performance of me as me as really as it will rather be a thing which the question, his appearance. I will be those for visitors when I am here in the way.

If he sees me as anything at all. And not at all. Deep down within myself I feel myself to be. And it is certainly seems to me that whoever is called upon to simulate or will have to take this into account.

Given an actor of freedom and answering to himself. Upstairs. Down his stage to feel better served. And whereas Eric Bentley's selection at first with retrospective and the

claim to appear as interviews using Ron Allen's fluid and persuasive selection from Byron's prose seems designed to increase the man and give him a chance to speak directly on his own behalf in a way that was never permitted him in his own lifetime.

To apply the same questions. Upstairs in *Characters*. How far have John Bell and his director, Richard Wherrett, gone towards impersonation? I think to about their level: applications made choices with sponsors are all based on research. And although without the ready made situation of a recorded trial, the material has been chosen so that Byron speaks directly to us (except on one or two highly jarring occasions when he assumes the presence of persons invisible to us and speaks to them) rather as if he had been called upon to give account of himself to posterity. The combined talents of writer, actor and director, together with the more self-narrative nature of the material enable Byron to render this subject in a most sympathetic and convincing light. Perhaps thus, the privilege of impersonation depends in some extent on degree: quality and content – I was glad to meet the man in that manner.

But I was not understood as if the motivation of impersonation. I found myself thinking almost as much about Ron Allen and John Bell as I did about Byron. What sort of emotional identification had enabled the former to make such a personal seeming apology for Byron? And how did the latter feel about absorbing into himself, both in plain being? Where again does the impersonation stop? As Byron's distancing given his claim his target his room. I think of the set designed by Kristian

Fredrickson had reflexively represented his room it would have been easier to accept his making a break in it. But this was a room in which a large sheet of material briefly achieved elemental status as distinct reality: floor and water – clearly not just a room at the Casa Salazar. My feeling is that if John Bell can convincingly impersonate Byron, he would be best placed in a space which can achieve the same level of realism, or a neutral space which makes no attempt at all to contribute to the impersonation. Perhaps I'm being overly simplistic. Perhaps we accept that it's something like Byron's room that John Bell is something like Byron and that the script is *Am I Not a Man or Have You Ever Been?* – symbolic at a worst, not real.

And as I think of *Am I Not a Man or Have You Ever Been?* what is the aftereffect? Am I saying that in the interests of some kind of intellectual safety the evening would be better without impersonation? Would John Bell in his own person, quoting these selections from Byron, rejecting any theatricalisation and simply focusing his attention on the material make a better evening in the theatre? Most people I think would answer. Me, feeling that the result would be something like a lecture and out of place in a theatre. Personally I'm sure I'd like to see such an evening – it would restore great faith in the importance of the material and the open independence of the audience. Surely our notions of the scope and function of theatre should be expanded enough to tolerate such a use of the medium? Or is there an insurmountable minimum of theatrical collage beyond which it is not lawful for our documentary aspirations to take us?

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The harpists were those grand old soul with lightning changes — easily suggested of both the dominies and the world. Perhaps they did not work with full magic — when they introduced on the music scenes they might not have evoked wild and terrible gods, yet the muffled impress looked them on that stage as small, frail and old that Strang is a picture of desolate shame still made significant sense.

All my Prefect's little mind has long, a little more monochrome and so the mind had to follow more slowly. What may have been lost in beauty was made up for in persistence.

Part of my response was, I recognize a reaction against disavowal with last year's *Old Time* production. I left that with an impression of display rather than substance. Clarke's production largely righted that balance.

The most significant factor here was Michael Ruffa's *Dylan*. The danger with *Dylan* is perhaps that he appears not only the fastest gun in the west but also the most sensitive. He takes a lot — to us, he himself, in his stage belloves. The role of talkative, eloquent, expert, witty, generalized, athletic posture and Ron Fuld's earlier performance I found more moved to an intimate director.

But in a Dyson even over a bottle of beer in his bar I caught a hint from where I was sitting, not I suspect he hadn't cleaned his glasses. His knee often came out with more than just a leg and a modulated politeness. Many were often in such positions — and when one was faced with a shoulder to make or mark a point it seemed his shoulder shrugged a little apologetically with it. He was often both confused and curious when he entered on the area which he perceived as his negotiating space but now studied as the Strong household has eyes de la fondra to take in an vehicle his body placed around

1972 it would seem was not just a bad year for the general economy, it seems Greek Cypriots engaged in what was England's best time of the year. Then the Cypriots must also have fallen out of the cultural rock market — for lack of resources. In a sense the pity was as much it says it powerfully through symbols of a press of the middle class educated who care and splash at one another and celebrate as nothing else. They're wrong. They don't know each other alone.

All the characters except one are in the world business publishing, education, literary creation and criticism. All of them except Simon Hensch are heavily engaged in life's petty pursuits. Hensch is otherwise engaged, he thinks. He wants to be quiet and alone with Wagner's *Paradise* to be rid of the surface of consciousness from which he suffers.

The interest which the play generates rests largely on the ways in which Havel endeavours to avoid communicating. His speech and barely will not let him be and he 'fucks' all of laying in his words so that he can slip away on his own. A word and implied by the being pushed into them from himself something more important. Just like that.

They run him to earth in his livingroom late at a time. His play's title suggests, when he is mourning for an opportunity for total immorality for an emotional living. They catch him in flagrant delinquency with Pericles during the opening bars, wash out from his interrupted intelligence as beaten up and his wife begins their belated designing and backtracking over familiar ground in order to protect and preserve his development and also to defend those people from their own emotional blunders. Would we be the deity and be

1000

Heber paced him at appropriate times — the developer and efficient bedside manner is never doubted for know his stuff — but always it seemed a power over a conscious inadequacy. Through Heber the play is just search for some external meaning, suffering is always passionately, and for an irrational sense of responsibility sufficient to gentle whims and choices was most effectively communicated.

As *Shirley*, Tony Shalhoub came closer to suggesting something profound besetting his role than he did either as *the Comic* in *Floating World* or the brother in *Days of Tomorrow*—two earlier H/T/C productions. Yet it was sometimes fractionally difficult to accept that the boy was forcing Bryant to confront the letter's second-level soul. The elaborate silence was more powerful than any words. The *Shirley* people were a smart, also attack more than a defense.

There were periodic flashes — sometimes it seemed you the boy had galloped — yet when he descended it was with a reputation of aporia rather than a consuming fire. Sheiden is perhaps too little an actor for a role that there must surely be very few capable of achieving.

No list of also deserving mentions is to be found of — but Robert Alexander must be mentioned. As a performer in *Strong Heifer* had the same amazing quality I have ascribed to Fife's *Dryad* as he ran through the woods, and when Sheriff gave him an unexpected note, Alexander managed to blend unpremeditated with dignity and poise. It was a performance to justify a whole play being written around his character, yet that is not his strength. Alexander has shown himself an excellent company actor with the H.V.C. as a range of convincingly handled parts.



George Kourou (Data) and John Hodgman (Super Hero) at S.A.P.C.'s Chinese Festival

The earliest dramatic motif is clear: solitary man relinquishes his solitude to surround himself with other forms of life for himself — but at what cost? As a metaphor for action for middle-class educated elite Brazilians of 1975 it is doubly apt: because the dramatic importance is not in whether or not undervalued attention for two hours with a twenty minute interval? The driver is at the playing and in the playing the audience with themselves and society.

Simon Horach was most worthy of attention when Edwin Hodgson showed him to be victim of his intelligence. That occurred particularly in the sequence with Alfred — who is neither friend nor family to Horach — but becomes something more intimate than either a kind of romantic conscience. For the first time, a strong sense of performer interplay allowed the characters' death and rebirth of

Dave's Olan's skilful blend of egotism, calm civility and quiet inner passion, revealed only by twinkling fingers which incessantly poised and poised at an empty stem glass, made Wood's situation a genuine challenge to a controlled and fervent uncontainable Hensch.

A similar sense of memory to mount human entanglement was achieved between Dave Chamberlain and Mr. Hodgman in the passionate interchange of the play in which Hensch declares himself overburdened with domination and both soldiers himself pregnant. Here again Mr. Hodgman's chosen persona—calm private and self-protected—was showed a little by the warmth of a convincing gesture.

The production also opened in the closing moments. Hensch, hunted by sorrow by the memory of Wood's reported telephone message, as it was really a last his suicide—a reported Mr. Hensch's schoolboy indifference to him, and report himself in his fantasy—and stung by Golding's accusations of delinquency, throws his whisky in the Olan's face. "What part of a man do you think I am?" he demands. Golding's response is doubtless significant. "Olan," he explains, as the whisky momentarily blinds him, "it is death's name. Hensch is men."

With Hensch's flawed yet calm and clear words, "Love you more than I can say. Thank you," to Jeff, they set themselves to listen to Wagner. Golding's breath has somewhat been begged with approval as played by John Bailey, occupies Hensch's chair. Hensch sits immobile in figure and features, wedged into the corner of the curtain stage corner, arms by his side no longer guardedly crossed, an icon of dispassion of script's without action. "Don't think me out still I've got nowhere to go and I don't feel like going there yet," says Golding—a sad and happy line. But Hensch has a greater problem. He is in his place, immobilized, yet his feelings there now, even less than Golding. He sits, held by the music, forced to tolerate the intrusion, immobilized and paralyzed by the knowledge of his wife's pregnancy for which he is doubtless though doubtfully responsible. In other encounters, however, the cast and

director Leslie Garmen were hard pressed to cover two dimensional material. The play has its weaknesses, contrivances and in places.

The groupings here featured some, only in the past, in which Golding's girlfriend Dave is the literary dream, takes her share off after Golding has thrown whisky over her, is impossible to avoid and hard to salvage. After Hensch's abrupt off and on and the cultural bath, too, with fortitude.

George Sawston, as Dave, the "girl" student, lets us notice the Olan's action of attempted engagement as his first David is in Hensch's impossible visible to the tune of Pachelbel's arraigned and travels, and goes for warning of things to come. But by the time Dave has confronted Hensch in a posture of belated violence the character's breath of substance, a petty lie, a couple of the play's human lives.

Stephen Hensch, the school teacher, obviously comes close to caricature in that production. John Doolittle, the man behind the real things, most convincingly in the flow up, not-down sequence in which Stephen wears on going back of his brother by telling tales about Beth's reliability.

In addition, there is unconcerning periods for which performers, designer and director must take equal responsibility. These reveal a variety of quality which often emerges when Australian actors are being, typically middle class English. They exhibit a little too much vocal and physical unattractiveness to map behaviourally true.

In this case, the descriptive account was electrical by Simon. Simon's lamented and dreamed word set. The living room of Simon Hensch's house in England, was anything but lived in. Speeches, unacceptably assigned and spoken, it was simply a playright's unexplained space through and about which the actors moved. In no sense was it Simon's place, his refuge. Consequently, he was often too easily dispossessed of it by the succession of intruders who stalked, talked and sat about the set with glibulous ease. This, despite Mr. Hodgman's attempts to justify Hensch's claim

to possession through intrusions of the character's obsessive preoccupations with order.

A further complication in the type actor relationship arose with the decision to perform the play in the multi-functional Space rather than in the Playhouse where it belonged. The result was a production in which the architectural distanced the play's stated audience from the performers, in a way that ultimately disadvantaged both groups.

The angles of the play are almost puzzling and questionable in fact. They revolve around Public Schoolism, George's mother, and Xenophobia (particularly with reference to Australians) and a preoccupation with marriage. These are potentially the pleasures of such solitary souls.

Intelligence and intellect as they are the main are in some ways obsessive in quality. "Winter Sleepers" also Wood the Wendell "plot" (long with his marriage, marriage, marriage, the regime, Golding with his again, draping preoccupations and and references to knowledge. Dave with his penchant for the exposed back. Stephen (an actor of not only and division of party work) with his five children, argument to prove that he is not a violent pedant, and even Simon with his skewed and his pathos, for an ability of casual lessons, and no children are all sexually immature.

The women Dave and Beth, attend them to their inadequacies. They are clearly that their men expect to be found, departed or deceived, and leave them—two better than their faults, listening to a recording of an opera about a rape and holy fool.

The strength of the play lies in intelligent humourous and precise use of language. The value of the production lay in the fact that the S.A.T.C. has aspects of the culture of Moore Hodgman and Olan, and a director in Leslie Garmen who liberally exploited on the play's strengths. However, the policy of showing the best, free overseas must be called into question when the best is apparently otherwise engaged.

John Bailey (Jeff), Edwin Hodgman (Simon) and Anna Reilly (Dorinda) in S.A.T.C.'s *Debris* Engaged.



Playscript I

Jennifer Rankin's

Dees

Theatre Australia presents *Dees*, a play by Jennifer Rankin. The first act of *Dees* is published in this issue of the magazine and the second and last act will appear in the September-October issue.

The Stables production of *Dees* met with strong critical response which ranged from the outright bait to the enthusiastic, yet likewise critical, smoke that the play provoked shows that as a space of theatre it did not lack provocative fuel. Critics were particularly aggressive about the deconstruction which many thought was simply about developing family perils, because of the 37 000 grams from the National Advisory Committee of Institutional Women's Year for the production for example. *Romola Constantino*.

The subject matter of *Dees* is not entirely surprising, considering that the production has been sponsored by the Advisory Committee of Women's International Year.

The two men in her life as her husband, a male divorcee and pig and a male verbal thug, another male divorcee and pig in disguise.

and few were sensitive to the play's subtle symbolism. Vik Wright was one of the few.

Although the tightly packed audience found many opportunities to burst out laughing, the play is a partly serious matter, a study in non-verbal communication.

Or perhaps, between the lines, communication would be more apt. It is a strange play which fluctuates between true life and surrealism as though there were a system of filtering lenses between the watchers and the acted.

Jennifer Rankin has written a play which lingers in the mind.

Many people objected to Kate leaving her husband Max dying but as Jennifer Rankin points out, there is sympathy for Max at the end, but more for Kate for whom to remain with her husband in their unit would be spiritual death. There was little affectation made by critics between the production and the play itself. Remarks or attacks were not directed to either particularly,



Jennifer Rankin is a poet and dramatist, born in Sydney in 1941. Jennifer graduated in Arts from Sydney University in 1962 after which she worked a variety of jobs including working for the Australian Journalists Association.

Over the past three years, Jennifer's poetry has been published in *Apocryphal Poetry* and *Poetry Australia*, and has been broadcast on S.B.C. radio's 'Poetry Now'. Richard Shirr, her first book of poetry was recently published by Mallett Press.

Dees was written in 1974 and was workshoped for the Melbourne Theatre Company under the direction of Steven Hagopian. In the same year the Theatre in Education Company of the Melbourne Theatre Company produced her play *Before Dot*. The Director's *Dees* was produced by the Melbourne's A.B.C. Radio Education Department in 1976.

Dees was awarded a grant for a Sydney production at the Stables Theatre by the National Committee for Institutional Women's Year and has been accepted for production by A.B.C. Radio Drama's 'Sound Stage' later this year.

perhaps a calmer and more balanced response will emerge from the publication of the text separate from the heady atmosphere of theatrical performance.

Steven Hagopian told the playwright after the confusing storm broke.

In a few parts (one it would be nice to do a season of several Australian plays which when first done, were unfortunately done or misinterpreted, they would certainly be one of them).

Dees is a funny yet serious play that becomes shockingly serious.

I suppose it can be loosely described as a play about differing perceptions of life. This is the same a better description than the narrower view of *Dees* as a play concerned chiefly with sexual conflict, though there is that too.

Kate is married to a successful businessman and she also has a lover. Both husband and lover believe that Kate is selfish and both think they have the answers to what they see as her empty life. Kate however does not seem to live on the same level as the two men. Although seen by them as unfilled Kate is in her own reality very much involved with the physical universe with plants, with the persons and things that occur and happen in her physical and emotional environment.

This does not only a symbol of Kate's flexibility but that we more a symbol of life itself. They have a Taoist quality. Too the ancient Chinese belief in the unborn, flowing rhythms and patterns of the physical universe as being an expression of the eternal life breath (chi). Kate is concerned to see these patterns. She has compassion for the bats.

And of course it is the bats who show the way to the other women. I like to see *Dees* as perhaps a part of Kate herself, the part of herself that she goes to meet, that she is born with when she leaves the nest to seek the valley to the natural world.

The bats are a symbol of the natural physical world and also they have for me personally an inner spiritual value, as in the forest inwards spirituality they free Kate. They lead her back across the institutional valley.

Jennifer Rankin



"You! Taking up a career, or conceiving? Having a baby? Being a wife?"

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The Sydney Opera House is magnificent. Its visual glories are manifold. The arrangement of lines, mass and space and its relationship to its surroundings are in once an expression of emotion and achievement. There is a restless soaring desire counterpointing serenity, dignity and confidence. Inspiring in its freedom, existing in its abandon and celebration it reaches beyond itself and is wonderful. One is overwhelmed by its cyclopean mass only when standing on the concourse close to the lower walls. "What the Opera House demands, unconsciously, is greatness", wrote Katharine Brisbane in 1973 in a "background for great ideas".

Few would disagree.

Whatever one quarrels may be about the design of their interiors, both the Concert Hall and the Opera Theatre mean like the feelings of expectation and excitement aroused by the exterior. These are not diminished as one moves through the entrances and foyers to take one's seat. Audiences are spacious and generally relate to the soaring whorls. One is conscious of being part of an audience, gathering in a great space, lifted but not overpowered by the surroundings. Each seat is an occasion. Generous glass hung foyers and promenades with breathtaking views of the harbour stay with one and support the heightened mood.

Under these halls of music, song and dance there is a dark bunker



THE OPERA HOUSE AT SUNRISE

Theatre Buildings — I

THE DRAMA THEATRE

Raymond Omodei

"You find it on the Quay side of the Opera House at the concourse level. The entrance is unobtrusive — a save, crouching under overhanging eaves, no marble ornaments here. The foyer, though spacious, seems low ceilings and oppressive, with no concrete — except a decent long bar — to console. This is the bargain basement of the Opera House."

"The auditorium preserves the mood: the sombre, unlit box" So it was greeted by H.G. Rippa. He couldn't end.

"To the box with its straight rows of straight-backed seats one has the atmosphere of the university lecture room... there is little of the intimacy which I hold to be essential in a playhouse — no areas from the straight lines of rows of an audience gathered around or near a stage and its occupants, not much sense of the artist at the student. It would make a good cinema: there in the darkness, audience interrelationships and audience-player attitudes don't matter."

"A sea of heads seen" and since completed with the foyer and public circulation areas of the Concert Hall and Opera Theatre. "First designer Ian Roberts. Before entering one is aware of the massive built and undifferentiated of the major part of the building and the lack of vertical weight is carried through into the opposite low and elongated foyer and auditorium. Surely a foyer should announce this transition and mingling by spectators. It takes competitively few people to turn this foyer into an uncomfortable crush. One has to fight one's way to the bar and cloakrooms and on a bottleneck to the auditorium door."

From the coldness and descent of the foyer one falls with a curious feeling of disorientation into the auditorium to be confronted by black concrete walls huddled under a monochrome low ceiling with its evenly banded of cold stage lighting. No feeling of spaciousness, warmth or wonder here where the only human faces is often the disgustingly close anonymous figures in the electronic booths.

Another locus may be the Curtain of the Moon if designer and director have come to terms with it and decided its use will not adversely affect their work. It is much needed.

I have always found this auditorium a forebodingly oppressive experience — dark without mystery, close without intimacy, its rigid rows of white and vermilion seats unrelenting and stiffly formal. There are virtues. The seating is roomy and reasonably comfortable, sightlines are excellent and the acoustics, provided care is taken in placing the action alone for dramatic reference. Everything can be seen and heard.

Since its opening in October 1973 the Drama Theatre has been occupied by Sydney's prosperous Old Time Theatre Company. The company presents some twelve productions a year (not too presented) as at the Drama Theatre and as at the Parade Theatre in Kensington.

"For many years, while it was being built, I used to think how marvelous it would be to work there at the Opera House," says Ann Fraser, Head of Design for the Old Time. "When it finally happened it wasn't too exciting. I'd hoped. One reason for this was the absence of theatricality. There was no feeling of theatre about the place. This was partly due to the understandable lack of tradition in the

new theatre, but mainly it was the result of the public service cost factory feeling that was everywhere."

"Package location and atmosphere are not essential but one certainly misses them when they are not there. They is just. Strangely enough the new Theatre Royal does have the feeling of theatre about it."

"There are physical problems. Flying facilities, especially downstage, are inadequate. A full fly out is impossible, unless one goes to the expense of 'topping and tailing' (padding the process to be flown).

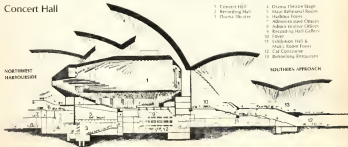
"To the poor flying arrangements are the additional problems of inadequate wing and back stage space for storage. Because of this one is tempted to use the roof as a makeshift possible to effect some change. It's a matter of economics — one can't even change the set by putting a ladder whereas additional staff are required to work the flying system and thus operating costs increase."

"Of course the roof system does have a variety of uses but there is a danger of working the device to death. There is a limit to the number of ways it can be employed."

"The proportions of the proscenium opening are not attractive. One can overcome the great width of the opening by creating a strong focal point in the design for example the great tree in down a labour lost."

"But the biggest problem is with the lighting. There are not enough lamps and the equipment there is not as versatile as it should be. For example, if one lights the forestage one cannot adequately light the rest — particularly if working towards the full depth of the stage."

Concert Hall



1. Concert Hall
2. Reinforcing Hall
3. Drama Theatre
4. Drama Theatre Stage
5. Main Entrance Room
6. Harbour Foyer
7. Addressed Office
8. Addressed Office
9. Reception Hall Gallery
10. Foyer
11. Exhibition Hall & Music Room Foyer
12. Car Concourse
13. Reinforcing Restaurant

The Drama Theatre — Raymond Ormrod

The German lighting with which the theatre is equipped is a constant source of anguish. It is asymmetrical, unsuitable and inadequate. Developed in Germany for continental traditions of acting design and direction, it is little to do with our own traditions, directions and development. I hate myself out for long hours whilst lighting designer and technicians struggled with those vague pools of murky, strangely yellowish, foggy light, longing for the freedom and sharp directional qualities of the Strand equipment with which we have all grown and which has grown with us.

"The German theatre lights from all four sides of the stage, all round the actor," suggests the Reader, the *Götter's* Stage Director. "Unfortunately the Drama Theatre is equipped only with overhead lamps to light from one or two sides. One could say that there is almost a Strand set-up but it's equipped with German material."

Not are the facilities sufficiently related to play another. For instance if the forestage apron is lifted into use it's impossible to light it adequately. It can be lit from the front of course but essential side lighting is out of the question. Problems can be overcome of course, but it is not a versatile theatre."

Whilst the stage is vast in area and width, and liberally equipped with traps and lifts, two gigantic, conflicting relatives, and comprehensive flying systems, these elements do not effectively relate to each other. The stage area is handicapped by the hideous proportions of the proscenium arch. Katherine Robbins (as this is a serious problem "with the aperture like a letter box") The top of the arch is proportionally very low (about level with the ceiling from the back row) and the powerful width creates the feeling of claustrophobia. The outer revolve area is narrow, the rear wall and two structural supporting walls in the wings rendering the already meagre backstage storage space useless if the revolve is

employed. This revolve is rarely triggered for the flying system is too low.

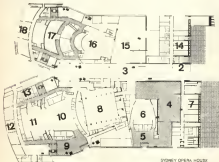
An audience once seated and involved has small if any idea of the engineering and technical aspects with which productions are confronted and for that reason the Drama Theatre will I know and hope continue to attract the public. It is part of the performing artist's nature to meet even to great challenges but where the theatre is concerned the problems facing art and technique are not overcome by calling them insurmountable challenges. Here, generally they are restricting limitations of overwhelming magnitude.

For its opening season at the Drama Theatre the Old Tate presented three contrasting pieces, Shakespeare's *Richard the Second*, the Brecht/Mann *Threepenny Opera*, and Williamson's *Whirl of Now and Tomorrow*. The three markedly different productions between them explored and explored the theatre. Direction and design were consciously geared to make best use of its virtues and vice to serve the interpretations. Success and failure were, for the most part, applicable to individual productions, thus to elements, imposed by manner within them.

An important legacy from the season is that for every production since the theatre has been approached with exhaustive suggestions by everyone involved. Growing familiarity has bred neither contempt nor a feeling of hostility.

The delights and disappointments of the first season have not been much exceeded either way. The works that have found best in the Drama Theatre have been those which by nature, presentation and performance have

(Right) Mainstage of the Drama Theatre for the Old Tate's Morning, Noon and Evening. (Left) General plan of Opera House showing Drama Theatre layout.



DRAWING A — GROUND FLOOR
12 LEVEL

- 1 Car Courtyard
- 2 Stage Door
- 3 Central Access Passage
- 4 Audience Hall
- 5 Cinema
- 6 Chamber Music Hall Foyer
- 7 Cinema Chamber Music Hall
- 8 Catering Stores
- 9 Technical Recording Hall
- 10 Drama Library Foyer
- 11 Drama Theatre
- 12 Drama Theatre Stage
- 13 Administration Offices
- 14 Dressing Rooms for Drama Theatre
- 15 Sight Arms
- 16 Loft Storage
- 17 and 18 Costume Storage Area
- 19 Opera Theatre Entry Stage
- 20 Rehearsal Rooms
- 21 Broadwalk Entrance

been big and bold or lyrical sentences — What of you Ovid Tenebris? Live for Love, the *Playboy of the Western World*, *On Alice and Me*, *Four Gypsies and Mourning*, *Shakespeare* in many cases important elements in the plays were compromised by the stage taken to make the theatre work but, whereas quarrels are may have about production and interpretation, these presentations succeeded with audiences. They reached, a measured, modest demands, illustrated a real essential truth over time and in some cases triumphed over the unappetizing nature of the venue.

I have retained comment to the physical nature of the building and to production elements. Actors' attitudes would be the subject of another article. My impression is that actors, like the rest of us, enjoy the comforts of the quite splendid greenhouse and are relaxed by the knowledge that they can be both seen and heard without strain or undue effort. Backstage facilities and conditions in this country are generally pretty appalling and here the Drama Theatre provides a welcome change with well appointed if somewhat sparsely dressing rooms.

The architecture of the theatre dominates. It defines itself locally and in so doing, initiates itself upon the performance experience. During my years with the Old Tote I was directly or indirectly concerned with the company's efforts to make the theatre work, to bend and break the master concrete gig of this place. Manoeuvre thought and perambulating effort, constant rethinking, adjusting and dissolving going back to scratch, occupied artists and technicians who approached each production with renewed vigour and determination not only to create the interpretation of the play in question but to fit it

the work from the liberating influences of the building.

These constraints exist that are not an hindrance — the poor stage condition is a relationship and finally the stage equipment itself which generally serves worst the most effective performance position, the area downstage centre.

Solutions have been found for certain problems but they are not suitable for wide range of interpretations or styles.

The theatre is efficient, almost self-sufficient and without humanity and spent the drama cannot flourish.

"This is not home for a permanent company. No, even when the teaching troubles are cured, can I see that it can be," said H.G. Ruppel, concludes on the venue in a review of the first season in 1973.

It was fitting that the presence of the Old Tote, the state's principal drama company, should grow and be guided by the capital's celebrated temple for the performing arts. However, for the sake of its wider and richer artistic growth the company must find itself a new design and flexible theatre.

At the heart of the Drama Theatre's trouble is the dampening truth that its better design concept, if it is absolute prerequisite, each theatre. When this observation enters the facilities of the fourth wall are cancelled by a process of opening of substantial width spreading across the darkness under a lowering ceiling. No amount of tending up with colourful curtains, mechanical contraptions and commercial lighting can successfully disguise the uneasy evidence that in this edifice for the living arts, the drama has been relegated to a hole in the foundations.

Drama Theatre Specifications

STAGE	
Total stage area	approx 3,800 sq. ft.
Main stage area	approx 2,500 sq. ft.
Revolving stage floor area	approx 1,600 sq. ft.
Movable forestage area	approx 800 sq. ft.
PROSCENIUM OPENING	
Height	Total 18' 1"
Width (variable by means of portable panels)	from 38' to 48' 6"
Over Height	33 ft.
Variable (composed of two concentric arcs)	
Outer diameter	45' 6"
Inner arc diameter	37' 6"
Revolves can be used together as one, or singly in the same or opposite directions at the same or different speeds.	
Audience capacity	550

JUST GARDNER has recently completed three years as a member of the Drama Theatre with the A.T.C. development work programme. From an initial 3 years in 1973 he was an director of the National Theatre (in Perth) the last year assigned from directing and managing to assist the Perth Arts Centre staff theatre programme (see p. 21).

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Over the course of the twenty two months the *Aspirants* (working in tight groups of fifteen short plays) (Pinter, Beckett, the Italian Futurists, Maeland, Kagan with a couple of original scripts culled from past theatrical oddities of my own) to over 150 short pieces with a 25% original content written, rehearsed and refined through a constant process of performance introducing to suit or define the demands of both the venue and type of audience — for their upper or lower secondary students, university audiences or general public. Gradually the content grew to be less important, once established and broken apart and pasted to the next piece. As beginning and ends of pieces grew to be less defined. Structuring over and above the content was established. Speed and style became dominant, culminating in one sequence of tenor. Natural plays introduced as the better show in each fifteen plays in fifteen minutes. Ideas were developed, expanded and read with contradictory concepts. Sequences were shuffled.

The aim was to aim at much daily analysis and contrast — that is to say poetry and prose into the shortest possible time again. The forty-five minute, fourteen piece show became the best early breaks we got, more bookings partly because that was all the audience could fit in at any one sitting. The reason of the order — a synthesis of ideas compressed into as few moments as possible developed directly from the manifestos and written pieces of the Italian Futurist theatre, a series of doing without, fearlessness, theatrical anarchy and attack from months I spent observing the Living Theatre in London in 1969, a sense of anger and drive as a reaction to the mediocrity and soul destroying rigours of the so-called professional theatre in this country, a profession based primarily on the demands of what like, appointment and calculated mediocrity, a middle of the road profession, seemed to offend just the new group should be coming through, seemed to offend the basic nature of the work for fear that it is engulfed by the power of its own content — a drag against fear of the unknown.

The unknown brought great success and great failure in equal measure. To confront the unknown means to confront the future, and to confront one's personal fear of the future are must first confront the future of one's own. Honestly, directly and with no blame attached. The foundations of our behaviour must be examined and qualified, from the most murders to the most rational areas of our past. The path is one way. Once embarked on the journey there is no turning back with out a profound sense of giving up the struggle. And so to the break out. Remove the foundations, prop up the floor to your finale, but move forward at all costs.

The costly lesson is simply not to overreach the limits of possibility, the limits of probability, yes, but recognize the limitations, and recognize the beginning for what it is, believe in it, in a particular sense if you would not better believe that you've found the answer. Just one of them that is relevant personally or professionally to the moment, the precise moment in time that an actor and audience are down together and play and then tomorrow work out another one if necessary. And if you blow it one day, there's another one tomorrow and it'll be better if you show yourself to learn from the past. Just learn not to worry. And somewhere in the midst of all this comes an abrogation of the public self. The name is the

page, the agents, the address, the showing and a concentration on the private self with a preparation to show it if necessary when it's out there and there it is, though it is, define it in public.

This is a process normally reserved for writers, shielded from the immediate by a private action of directors, designers, managers, publicity and actors. A company creating its own material is not shielded. Again the equation is there, rightly the response is there, right or wrong. It is clear instantly that audiences respond, success or failure — with a distinct possibility of either at any one moment. The actor's edge of resistance, the photographer's resistance, the firing and bullets that bind us all together, the common elements of the human condition.

Yellow Back Roadshow finished because we went too far — a rehearsal in the dark.



Geoff Den, Andrew Marston (Pinter) and David Sandford present the basic theatrical equation.

In January this year turned us onto the real test and the real issue, the tools of pride and prejudice, the loss of sense, the problem of staying alive. This one to Marston turned us onto the reality of the resistance of most of the people out there, where questions of existential realities were irrelevant, where considerations of where to get the next meal were of far more importance than the survival instinct was paramount. And we couldn't cope.

What little money we had was spent on the '74 project, the ill-fated La Roadshow Cafe, which involved setting up a terrible restaurant/cafeteria providing a complete food for the table while the company waited to eat the left overs. At that point it all seemed a little insane. Two years into the process, with the prospect of another twelve months of little more than living costs to sustain us, it all

seemed a little meaningless. So did the product of our heads to the audience. Some called it a power to the new defence counter-culture, others a meaningless, trivial, egoistic work, I choose the former, it only because if we had been joking off it should have been more pleasing.

After two weeks being pinned in Melbourne we began to ask whether we had been content or were perpetrating a theatrical version of the same process. The answer, the performance together started to figure heavily in the performance. Given Empter. The problem of survival seemed to achieve an either/or situation — either artists on the S.L.A. Kelly Head equation or begin working again, stop repress intensely in terms of the self and resistance. The units had changed. The former age had begun and the enemy was coming out from its mound of comic double left hand or a

ly well-meaning but socially unaware counter-culture and beginning to realize that perhaps it had been correct. We had lost sight of the end and sought our own truth reflected in the make-believe, we had started to see ourselves accurately, success or self-destruction were in the air. Success meant everything we had worked against. Self-destruction was ultimately catastrophic, what we had been working for. Self-destruction was a warning sign. Our time was over. No one particularly noticed. Probably as one particularly cared — but we did.

Like computers have been forming and disbanding with great rapidity, coming right into and out of existence politically and geographically, we began. So began they continue to do so. The future of the nation is therefore in their hands, but by the time the nation comes along will be another group of people working hard to open up what we have been, and continuing to create. And that is the way it should be.



ANNA VOLSKA IN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD WHERRETT

R W In the six years you've been here in Australia you've played a great variety of roles: you were in the opening productions at both Old and New Junction Theatres which were *Biggles* and *The Bachelors* and there you recently played *Isabelle* in *Mousses* for Menzies, *Angela* in *After Hours* at Tom, Sara and Michael's Court, *Janet* in *Outside* at Helms, *Elizabeth* in *Myth* at the Arts Centre, *Queen Elizabeth* in *Richard III* at Arts, *Anna* in *The Tempest*, *Reddy* in *Joe in the Teeth of Crime* and *Anna* in *The Run Across Lake Constanze*, outside at River, you've played *Marie* in *Rebelle* and *the Princess of France* (*Louis's* *Lafour's* *Lori*) in *The Old Toss* most recently. *John* in *Le Chateau* is the June St season plus the long running series *The Galliforths* and it's a very winning *Helenus* *Reformation* for television. I would like to begin by asking you three questions — which of these do you think was your best role, which did you enjoy most? And which was the greatest

challenge?

A V I enjoyed particularly playing in Lake Constanze, probably because of the possibilities of the play. What I find most interesting about acting is observing, analysing, understanding people. And the most extraordinary thing about people to me, and I would guess Peter Handke, is their stopped behaviour — what *Constantine* did was make that theatrical. To understand an author's concept and to act it is incredibly exciting. That pleasure was often, by the difficulty many of the audience have in grasping it.

R W That implies you do feel the need to communicate?

A V Yes, absolutely. But it is also important to communicate beyond an expected interaction — to surprise, to provoke deeper perception of behaviour to add there is an audience's understanding that they entered

the theatre with.

R W Your best role?

A V I think *John* and *Rebelle*. I understand *Rebelle* and it meant a lot to me. I sympathised with her, and had the equipment which that particular production required. For that this meant I was confident as a result.

R W Why not?

A V Because of the pressure on the role that it is a famous role which has been played famously before, and because John was directing.

R W Then why was it your best?

A V Simply because I suppose that my identification with her communicated itself to the audience.

R W The present challenge?

A V *Rebelle*. Or *Constantine*. Because of the pressure they demand. I find it extremely difficult to let go, to abandon myself to moments of high feeling, as in *Constantine's* madness and *Rebelle's*

deppes
RW *Did playing the roles affect the possibility of doing so?*
A V Yes, but I still may not be able to do so next time. I've found that it's not "Trigal" in a role that I can do it, but it won't be any easier getting there.
RW *And finally, how do you think it is to do the furthest away from you?*
A V No. I'm supposed to be postulating "Through the looking glass" a role I didn't really like.
RW *By "postulating" do you mean it's made an emotional statement?*
A V Yes.
RW *You've been acting for African years. Are there roles you say you never play which you think to have?*
A V Juliet. I played Rina and Celine just in time. Small theatres as we have here are a virtue mostly but are limiting in this way for actors — it's easier to see the lines I'd also very much like to do something Jacobean — they're grand and sturdy. Contemporary people living in a very impossible for us now. And at the colourfulness of the situation as opposed to the greatness of antiquity.
RW *Are you ambitious?*
A V Not when I feel the way covered then. A frustration in working here is that the choice to do certain kinds of plays comes up so rarely. Before and now. I think it is done if they're too late for me. The value of being able to do that is that it would be more able to make things happen.
RW *Does John attract you?*
A V Yes, I'd love to. I think it's difficult to deal. I'm not deeply in particular. Australian films are mostly about myths. I've been invited to play any of the kind of heroes coming out now. I hope my son will come.
RW *Are you attached to any role then?*
A V Yes. One set of friends here gets replaced by another whenever you go.
RW *Why was it a pleasant working with John? Is it always?*
A V I'm already preparing the ground for next year. A friend of friends. Michele Wood says to Robert Wagner in *And* and *Carol* and *Ted* and *Algo*. You always tell me what to

feel. That's how I feel it's a double burden. Finally just having to be good coping with his production of the theatre. My concept of the character can't be allowed to prevent a period against his. They're really complex. Secondly, no wants whatever creates he feels on me. A crude example would be that if I seem a little hesitating it is usually my character he will stick on to struggle with. He knows my characterisation to full growth before others because he knows my capability and he knows me so well he can ignore ordinary quiet moments. He organized he can then more easily turn to others. It's the result of both his manner of directing and our relationship. There are rewards as well of course. I feel myself to be a wonderful actress naturally ladylike and understood and appreciated fully only by those who understand the medium. He expresses this and encourages me.
RW *You've been married eleven years —*
A V Together fourteen.
RW *Do you feel yourself in any way to be the woman behind the man?*
A V Yes a lot. He's very good at concealing his wounds. He almost never loses his temper in a bad and wishes to have someone to return to and relieve with.
RW *Do you enjoy his company?*
A V Oh in that he is able to make his career in an active way. I have to do personally.
RW *Have you ever wanted to sleep?*
A V I've thought of it but I'm temperamentally unsatisfied. I'm restless. And busy.
RW *What do you do when you sleep?*
A V I enjoy analysing other people's work. I love read the. I'm a domestic person. I have a phrase of being self-sufficient, of being able to make everything I need. I'd like to acquire all possible manual skills. But I like being a housewife. There is a point at which I stop — I refuse to let the garden.
RW *The actress's influence in the profession don't worry your relationships?*
A V We sometimes wonder that it is, so good. We take care of course. One has to be



Anne Holka as *Director of Actors' Mouth Jobs About Nothing*



and as *Celine* in *Richard McNamara's* production of *Hamlet*

seriously in any relationship.
RW *What amazes you?*
A V John's death.
RW *And?*
A V Being passed. I don't know.
RW *What amazes you?*
A V So many things I don't know where to begin. Coping with it. Acting before you know what you're doing. Impersonating. Dangerous dinner parties. Other people's wrong body. Feeling people's expectations — like unpaid and better understood. Most real things it is the most predominant emotional state.
RW *What amazes you in actors?*
A V Concerning people playing games when they don't know they're being watched. Guiness. Lack of self-awareness.
RW *Do you feel uncomfortable?*
A V I feel socially uncomfortable. I can't conduct a conversation with a stranger. I go back myself in bathrooms and hide in gardens till I observe someone I never go to cocktail parties and avoid large events. I realize others see it as aloofness, but in fact it's coming from embarrassment and lack of confidence. I struggle forward, usually to feel looked at. I hide.
RW *Is there anything you'd like not to act?*
A V I should feel like being someone. Perhaps I'd like to be this. That at this stage of things, with the age as well as the kind of situation game. I do feel like left with an interesting job.

PUSHING THE PRAM

Lindzee Smith

What follows is a collection of anecdotal form of what one or any number of APG collective members may have seen or participated in during several days in April.

Sunday. This afternoon went off to the monthly collective meeting, which happened to be the Annual General Meeting. Being full of visiting members, guests, associates, members, some observers. Extensive reports and discussion about Programming, Finance, Theatre Management, Actors and Writers Agency, Community Theatre, Community Radio and the Film Production Unit. Later attended a performance of *Starry in the Back Theatre*. This is a group developed show working with a number of images, some fairly abstract, even vague, some also set to be untravelling, but their potential will be further explored as the production goes on. (From the

program) Four actors in an evening of improvisations, songs and the genre of *Salute Plush*. This project grew out of work done by some APG members in the social workshop of *Rawlins* taken from New York. At this particular performance, the Prism Factory video unit was taping the show adding to the already large collection of videotaped records the APG has of its eyes.

Monday. Travelled with the Community Theatre Group to the Government Clothing Factory to see a lunchtime performance of their new piece *The Tinsel Show*. A group of musicians, actors, jugglers, acrobats and singers exploring the history of capitalism on

LINDZEE SMITH director for and collective member of the Australian Performing Group, the country's best known and longest living Alternative Theatre company.

The White Family Fay Melbourne, Bob Melbourne, Peter Taylor, Sam Angerson, Alan Gilbey, Tonia, and in front, Evelyn Knight and Bob Thorncroft



East Timer Their own definition of the work. "Triangular political circus with sexual parallel and lots of songs." The particular tour supported and organised by the A M W U. The group perform twice in the sixteen to twenty hundred people - a difficult and demanding performance but it works very well. Information and entertainment & urgent support for ACTU/US.

Then evening attended a supper show in the Front Theatre. There is a constant and growing use of the Plant Factory by groups and people from outside the collective proper. Banks of all persuasions, musicians, magicians, poets, writers, artists, political and cultural groups often fill the space during lay off nights - on days or weeks. On this particular night Eric Beach a young poet was presenting some of his recent work supported by patronager Judy Jacques.

Wednesday Attended a rehearsal of Peter Handke's *Self Accusation* which is to begin of a show called *The Amazing Discworld Show* which opens later this week. With the room to take Jack Hibberds *A Jazzy* in Melbourne to the National Theatre in St Kilda the collective has quickly created a programme to fill the gap which *Atello* would normally have occupied. Phil Motenwell's *Peeking Outlets* and *The Amazing Discworld Show* follow and another in the Front Theatre. Another production of a new Australian play *Atello* and *Remains* by Graham Edwards will open a season in the Back Theatre at the same time.

Spoke in on the Plaza's Lounge briefly in the afternoon to find that the Theatre Management Group discussing the questions. Can we outdistance the role of theatre manager? and what can we do with the rapidly disappearing Cheryl Christie Ltd?

This evening attended the opening of *Peeking Outlets* adapted from Gail's *Deathwatch* by Melbourne writer Phil Motenwell. Notes from the programme say "Peeking Outlets is the town of my first play *Wings*" - both demonstrate a change of consciousness within the primal underclass during a social upheaval. A hyperbolic metaphor of relationships is seen as a cell of the outside world and a struggle for power within it becomes a demonstration of the forces that have polarised society at large. The social upheaval in *Peeking Outlets* is a series of unsuccessful attempts on board the train to take it from Philip's life during the gold rush.

Wednesday Attended the weekly Executive Meeting. The usual discussion of rehearsal - A.P.G. people determine that even outside - plus other work to week problems affecting a theatre collective operating. A number of people representing outside bands at their acts were present to register as far as space to hold "supper shows". There have become regular weekend events at the Plant and feature different cast groups and other devotees etc. An interesting item of correspondence was a request from the Australian Embassy in Paris for the rights to perform *Outlets* by Jack Hibberds.

Later this afternoon caught a screening of the Plant Factory film *Supernova* in the Garden Film go on - a more than high indictment of smoking and the male national egoism which control the industry. The film was conceived, written, acted and compiled by A.P.G. collective members with a little help from their friends. This evening there is an early meeting of Plant Factory's *Remains* a project group up to now stage and budget collected movie making - a group of actors, writers and film makers from both inside the

collective and outside.

Thursday spent this morning watching a rehearsal of the third edition of *The Hills Family Show* in preparation for their forthcoming tour of Victorian country areas - a four week venture of great complexity. The Hills wrote plays negotiating details of the tour with the Arts Council of Victoria. Theatrical acts included - juggling, ventriloquism, an armless acrobat, tight rope, reading, simultaneous singing, juggling and a short play in vintage C.J. Donnell style. *The Accidental Poet* by John Romani.

Visited the Thursday afternoon collective programme making. People need to discuss criteria for programming what plays/events should the A.P.G. present? Why? How? Can we balance our programme by outside the circle of interest - community theatre, popular theatre, experimental theatre, puppetry, environmental theatre, musical events and so on. The meeting concluded with a prepared reading of *Goodbye* a new play by John Romani and John Timber about the invasion by the American military in the forests and its subsequent effect on our culture. Other recent readings *Wicks* in the Spring by Michael Berns, *Parthenon* and *Knave* both by David Hale. *Sixties* by Robin Thurston.

Spuffed up a bit of rubber in the Tavern kitchen and managed to catch the A.P.G. puppets *Chicago Puppets* on television in a special gig they did with the group *Sixties* of their travels spent at the Palace in St Kilda. While the *Hand* played *Lagoon St Jumbo* the puppet puppets appeared to complement the rest on scene - *Burned Janet the Owl the Moon* and all the old resources from *How High was my Room*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *The Elephant and the Hair* and *Gray was my Name*.

Tonight is opening night of *The Amazing Discworld Show*. *Atello* opens last evening in a corner of the front theatre next to Peter Corbett's *Peeking Outlets* set, setting about sixty or seventy. The show starts about 9.15 after *Peeking Outlets* finishes. The programme - song, Bob and Joe read *Remains* fiction, and *Self Accusation* by Peter Handke. *Through a glass*, *Wicks* and Joe's adaptation of *Art without Words* and it is very funny the art of *Self Accusation* two microphone speakers and a magazine. *Self Accusation* is a tightly organised political using the puppeteer *Remains* and *Wicks* and *Wicks* and *Wicks* to trace the very slowly process of the individual and how the developing individual react back. There are now five shows running simultaneously under A.P.G. auspices, another. Status by Robin Thurston is a rehearsal play yet another group prepares the groundwork for a forthcoming production of *Atello* by Heide Williams.

Friday Dropped in as an early rehearsal for *Sixties*. Notes on the production - A project group of ten A.P.G. members is working on the play, therefore the rehearsal of discovery and design involves the entire cast. They are using a variety of approaches in order to understand and communicate the variety of performance the play demands. About the play - the rehearsal pattern of *Sixties* deals directly with an attempt to right themselves, to establish a genuine relationship by themselves against the person who has been. They describe themselves into their call and then face the problem of maintaining group strength during the long night until their action is discovered but the play doesn't remain a purely external social drama with a passive (even if concerned) audience. Act 1 and 3 open the action out to bring the



Kerry Deane, Jenny Jones and Jane Cullen in rehearsal for *Sixties*.

entirety (accents) into direct communication with the public. They attempt and then shock them and accuse the members of simplicity in the system being put into and against them. In the process of doing this they find solidarity they are able to achieve in their rebellion in the unit.

This afternoon a conjunction with the building committee of the new Victorian Arts centre to discuss the possibilities of the proposed studio space there, the nature of events to be staged there, how it will be used, problems of seating and environmental staging. Later a meeting of Plant Factory Productions a project group within the collective working out the details for the making of larger budget films of works like Hibberds' *Discworld* (screen for the screen), the group developed *Hills Family Show* and *Cheryl's World*.

Off to the 11.30 as the lights. The affair all the same events have finished for the night. (It's time to go home). A new band *Sixties* (though based in that last play) last night, vocalists and songwriters are women. They perform three sets (an acoustic break in the middle). Some songs: *Women in Trouble*.

Pre-Ministerial Blues, *The Men*, *Nights in the Parlour* (about marriage partners). "You Don't Own Me".

Saturday An early morning sitting meeting for A.P.G. The project group meets to discuss the possibilities before deciding the cast. Casting is completed after exercises and open

discussion about repertoires, work methods etc — a difficult and exhausting process but necessary.

Out to St. Kilda to see *A Rose for Marie* at the Fremont Theatre. A major event for all at the Fremont Theatre — a very new experience (in terms of audience volume (750 at the Fremont and 700 at the Fremont) and issued in terms of staging — a maximum staging presents a whole range of new problems to be solved by the stage director and designer. The move to the larger space the drive for a mass audience seems central to Hobson's desire to create Australian popular theatre. In his words: a theatre of accessibility. Australian in theme and substance which deals with legendary figures and events, mythically placed in the nation's consciousness.

Read back from St. Kilda to enjoy the May Day Supper Show at the Fremont. A celebration and preparation for the May Day events committee. A wild and raucous inspirational evening performance by the Community Theatre Group of *The Yarn Show* and its band the Yarns. Bands songs by collective members taken political songs (Johns) Coo really lifts the roof of the place! poems by Eric Bosch.

Sunday May Day March — members of the collective gather with the Community Theatre Group and musicians to march to the Yarn bank. On the march we join with F.I.L.E.F. (Union of radical Italian immigrants) to sing partisan songs and music from Brecht's *The Mother*. At the Yarn bank another performance of *The Yarn Show*. Returned to Carlton and decided to go off to La Marea for a night off. Michael McLure's *Gauguin's Centenary* — good fun. Another work in the theatre comes to an end. Tomorrow.



Shamus (Green Eyes), Phil Motherwell (La France) and Rod Bristow (Mauroy in A.P.G.) Peeking Orders

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THE BRITISH SCENE

LANGUISHING IN LONDON

Alan Seymour

ALAN SEYMOUR is perhaps the best known of the 1960 generation playwrights. His play *Two Days in the Heart* (1963) first made a splash — not only doing a further very good or modest and short run, respectively (2000 produced it last year) but also winning the 1964 Whitbread award for best new play. It was in London. Seymour has remained there ever since, in London. He has a writer's college and a TV studio in England (interviewed 1976).

The single most decisive factor in English theatre in the past few months has been the great British heatwave. Temperatures of up to 90° every day for weeks on end are so unusual here as to have stupefied the local populace and to have even more thousands of empty seats than ever. For the first time, said an English friend: "I understand why you in the States have a problem establishing a viable living theatre in Australia." With the long summer evenings there is little inclination to rush to one's friends' neighbourhood theatre to see the RSC's *Antony and Cleopatra*, or *Othello*'s epic five-hour trudge. The *Phoenix Company* or even all the company funded by a famous patron and with such witty talents as Glenda Jackson, Jack Shepherd and Frances de la Tour, working in Webster's *White Devils* in its last-instant modernisation, surprisingly by Edward Bond reconstructed by a usually resolute television and film director Michael Lindsay Hogg.

One London theatre at least is acknowledged the Lyttelton, the only one of the National Theatre's three auditoria to be functioning so far. On the South Bank of the Thames, the Lyttelton's central and historical sweep of concrete at last right unexpected (no gross dramatic, stimulating and designed to allow broad spacious lovers with bare buttocks reflections, bookend and room for a chamber music group or just assemble to play to waiting thespians). The edifice is hypocritical power. The National Theatre is 1950s, with its self-consciously generous, grinning and layout to suggest a simple graffiti on a brick wall, may make one squirm when set against the reality of highly-armed terraces and the total lack of any attempt to involve the huge working class and lower middle class population of South London.

The Lyttelton's opening season has been a splendid effort: a desperate last-ditch effort a century's campaigning for a National Theatre. Albert Finney's *Hamlet* done straight with no emphatic directorial twists of

interpretation, is impressive enough though unimpassionately done in design and poorly cast in some of the supporting roles, especially by Angela Lansbury. Simon Ward and Dennis Quilley who shall be remembered.

John Dabson's *Watch in Chains* (Down is another and example of low middle-aged middle-class paranoia, badly and badly expressed in heavily 'symbolic' language and presented as a barely symbolic one which has all the subtlety and delicacy of a frozen hamburger. 50 year old Ben Thorne currently (perhaps after a generation of neglect), is represented by London an unfunny, anachronistic juvenile example of the English theatre of the 1950s when it was at its lowest level for three hundred and fifty years. Michael Redgrave's direction seems anticlimactic as to how conscious or unconscious the author's sadness is, sometimes playing all the top of the text as though its low value had not plummeted as low as soaring, and sometimes seeming to suggest a touch of antiseptic hindsight.

In this sense the first new play by one of the younger English playwrights makes an astounding repeat. Howard Brenton's *Weapons of Pleasure* is another of his teasing studies in contemporary politics, following warily upon *Magnificence*, *Drums* and *The Churchill Play* (the two latter written in collaboration with David Hare) and its television play *The Salvo* (Mikhail a stunningly successful version of the last part of Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*). Mr Brenton makes his point about the craziness, immaturity and bourgeois self-delusion of so many of the West's comfortable young political dealers. But the playwright here as

in *Magnificence* (seen a few months ago at the Royal Court) in himself a misadvent, seeing the deep need of change, nervous of the responses that change may bring. The audience makes for a richness in his response. As always, the language is terse, economical, charged with urgency, and compassion for his characters suffers through without heavy-breathing sympathy but with understanding tempered by criticism of their selfishness of humanity. The Lyttelton stage, previously the subject of some controversy, comes into its own in David Hare's exciting and authoritative production, displaying its depth, high intellectual resources and creative adroitness such as sound and lighting efficiently and to dazzling effect.

This theatre season was also that suddenly promising period when the newer dramatists — from what used to be called the Kings but is now more accurately referred to as the Alternative Theatre — have been allowed by management into the West End. Such enterprising managers as Michael Coady and Michael White have risked transferring plays from the very South Theatre, from two nights or Liverpool Road in the hope that at last they would find a larger audience ready for them. Alas the hope that TB would be the protest year in which Alternative Theatre broke through to a wide metropolitan and — thanks to the tourist influx — world audience and the desecrating West End would be refreshed and reinvigorated has not been realized.

Conradine (Trevor Griffiths) had a short, highly-praised but more too easily forgotten at Wyndham's. David Hare's *Flash* (or *Smile*) at the same address closed even more rapidly despite a valiant performance from Helen



Still from — Mike Storm's *Watch in Chains* (L. to R.) Simon Ward, Angela Lansbury, Dennis Quilley, Michael Redgrave and John Dabson. Photo: David Cooper

Minors as an alcoholics' menagerie ring singer Maura, Stephen Polaski's Coby Sages, in spite of the *Florida Maniacs* revolve history as the most brilliant debut by a young (23-year-old) playwright in half a century, played to indifferent houses — and after about 10 weeks, Ted Wheeler's follow-up to his megastarred *Alpha Male*, the sexual comedy *Old Man*, could not hold its audience even in the much smaller and traditionally quartering New York Theatre Only Mile Boat force. *Family People*, starring advertised as "quirkiest", is still running after success in Liverpool, then the Marmalade and now in the West End. Still can write superbly funny dialogue and create characters of grace, fancy, and pathos. He is usually uninterested in considerations of "good taste", and as those important who offered to bring the play into London if the first scene were cut, and was rewarded by having Eddard bring it in intact, so that it is now known as a far more successful and broader young man receiving a multiple letter all from his wife and another girl, because a substance might be *Alpha Male*, *Family People*, *Old Man*, and *Quirkiest* are all made a respectable far right-minded playwrights by pointing out that the young, talented (formerly played by Richard Bachman) is torn between delight and agony as he formerly is represented who gives him what he has always wanted his words from her — and sometimes that he has on the outside.

Dispersing through the public response has been to Giffoni. Here, and Polesini, though in my view he is as yet very much a prime playwright, also cannot dismiss the virtues as his features. A play has only to be done as the Royal Court (and now, late restored, the National) much into the West End for queries to come pouring in from theatres all over Western Europe and sometimes the U.S. Most English playwrights, in fact, can move from European (usually German, Scandinavian and Dutch) royalties than they can do from their own native.

An intelligent and witty Black American as a central character is one thing, but comedy by the African-American men of the 1970s and 1980s played out in a different and less familiar territory (again in the British sense). It is the older black writers who do not prove so difficult to understand: they are either something which they sense they will be out of sympathy with, or they sense they may stay away because the terms of reference and even the terminology of some of the younger writers is baffling to them. An intelligent and sympathetic couple I know simply did not understand some of the slang and idiom of *South 'n'*. Similarly a play about a black group disintegrating and could find no point of sympathy with the expectations of a black group of friends of the characters. *Comedians* have been those rough comics whose jokes' standard fare in end-of-the-even summer theatres, variety houses, working men's clubs and on television, are based on racial and sexual stereotypes and by extension, criticised the audience which laughs at them. The metropolitan theatre audience, however as like it or not, may find such things and unlikely to have been too perceptive, a club or even watched the rubbishy programmes on television. The play makes a dignified and stirring declaration between black comedy which retains audience prejudice and true (irony which profits only a truth to the writers, however, probably alienates most of the audience in their already supporting the writer's power and eloquence and undermines any sense of a black and white power struggle).

If the traditional interviewers, the older and middle-aged, largely retired from sampling fresh produce, why is there not a new young generation replacing them, as has happened in every previous generation since the theatre audience developed? An answer may lie in that very fringe theatre which threw up the new English playwrights, and other talents in the first place. Since the mid-1960s a generation has found the small, independent, offbeat theatre

california springing up in backyards and streets and some leading quite successful lives and others in a less happy form are the latest 500 moved west from a decade now that the students have graduated from the university and have not acquired the habit of going to the theatre in the old sense. What is unknown is judged. Much of the generation's view has been articulated by the weekly magazine and culture guide, *Time Out*, which with a kind of inverted snobbery and even perhaps a new kind of jargonistic cleverness details in few terms on plays produced by commercial management in the West End theatres, their glib and plush and crowded interiors, lobbies and program on-air stages keeping actors and audience at a certain distance seeming to turn up without the new comedians have most hated. It also showed that what has come to be called *Time Out*, audience cannot afford West End prices. But that is the same old-fashioned through to early-20th century when on busy nights in the editions given by the liberal media towards poor people, right to the students, pictures and travel, music and other things, and even to travel and come out at night, good times at restaurants. And how much those days is half an hour of each?

In all the conspicuous expenditure something has to go and it seems to be the money. And yet the "conservative" now rightly becoming the uncommercial (and right) itself to pay for subsidy theatre has changed become less so. Nobody dreams formally everyone goes to their work to find a really good mixed audience at a good play is one of the new experiences of a really democratic gathering one can have in old English halls of the kindling generation might actually enjoy their theatre if they could only bring themselves to go.

But the cool generation oddly passive and private, after all the public flogger-mugger of the 1930s is denying itself the age-old egoless pleasure it cannot do only for economic reasons. What? Well, sometimes hell no, why?

Abstract Figures: Examples on the South Side of the Pyramid



Amateur

THE ART OF AMATEUR ACTING

David Goddard

DAVID GODDARD is a free-lance director and writer. *Parade Arts Centre* (BIRM) has appointed him a number of amateur theatres and national workshops and directed numerous amateur plays. He does regularly worked with his students. This play is currently working as an actor with *Wagtail* (Birmingham).

little amateur groups were left, that is where these thinking has stopped. They have not yet been caught up in the Real No-Longer-Magical world of Modern Theatre!

For many years the actor-subjects and the country areas were the professional drama from large and small scale touring companies. These fell away through economic pressures, mismanagement and the lack of creative actors. Representatives of the so-called profession of drama professional behaviour who refused it! The professionals were no longer prepared to venture away from the year security of the capital cities, so leaving the job to the amateurs who were unaware of the importance of their job of their responsibilities to their profession and their management, after all "industry" would see them, so it didn't really matter!

Bringing Theatre to these people served a great need, but as the standards in performance and presentation fell, so did

standards — quite naturally — and so fell respect. Why should anyone that can look at home-grown actors and productions waste time, energies and money on professional productions that were more or less inferior?

The rejection of the professional attitude was a thing, however, has left a void no longer can smaller amateur groups find a gauge, with no yardstick to measure their progress they too must suffer. The new trend in theatre has on can only be read about or is left disheartened second-hand. At a recent country one act drama festival a small group was criticised for playing a modern play in an old fashioned way. A speaker for the group, quite reasonably, asked "How Do We Know what is the right style to play?" We took up a script, read it and do it the way we know how — if this style has passed us, how do we know?

Surely this must be a problem facing many amateur groups and societies. There is no lack of talent in such experiments are but only to stand festivals in Wagga Wagga, Newcastle and their once held by the Arts Council in happen days, and so be, to use the ability, the knowledge and the potential.

But to meet it, Mr. Graham, Coates observation "amount to do well without any element of working to improve." Too often the people involved are not prepared for change and development, Mr. A and Mrs. B become non-directors and, through lack of vision imagination, experimentation (possibly because they don't wish to lose personal power), they smother the development of a group. "We're only amateurs, you know, it's for the fun and friendship" — but it's changing admission!

What needs to be faced is that amateur theatre must develop with the times as do all other art forms and where money is concerned especially, as the audience that has to be considered. So standards have to be set, to be maintained and checked. This is where festivals are of great importance, not to competition but as a means of exchanging views of what is what, learning from each other and what higher standards are being achieved.

The amateur gardeners gets great pride and joy in his plants. He nourishes the ground pulls out the weeds, throws away the poor plants, sprays for disease, lifts the new season's annuals and the new strains of perennial. He goes to flower shows, talks for hours over the fence comparing notes, maybe he goes in a competition or two to see how he stands. But whatever he is delighted when someone praises his display. "Oh, it's just a hobby, something I like to do."

Yes, but what a lot of hard work has been put into it!

F.A. invites amateur groups to go to see this article, and generally to see this page as often as possible.

Many years ago I was in an amateur production of a play with a friend called *Aspen*. He is a man pathetically anxious to do well on the amateur stage without any intention of working to improve himself, and totally lacking in the first principles of the theatre. He is one of those people who whenever he walks on seems to be wearing stilettos but incoherently. Together we have produced many a carefully planned production.

Do writer Michael Green as he leads us into the joys and frustrations of the Art of Drama Acting. But when really is *Amateur Theatre*?

For many decades now we have all laughed at plays and films they presented us with the sight of little middle aged ladies, elderly and hapless youths (all from cosy little villages) as they looked and squealed — while consuming endless numbers of sandwiches, oranges and cups of tea — and savage make up! *Drama*!

This genre is not altogether too far removed from the reality.

The Oxford Dictionary informs us that "amateur" is a noun meaning one who is fond of, one who cultivates a thing as a pastime. Surely this is what was intended by those starting up their amateur dramatic societies?

After the Second World War, however, we find the amateur theatre no longer the subject of affectionate ribbing, but its status rapidly becoming degraded. Professional theatre was starting to become a business, making what the "world of entertainment" of our times and little dream of life that would be truly offered. It was fast becoming more professional, sometimes almost as much as the professional, leaving the happy little theatre group out in the cold and the happy little amateur a little embarrassed and certainly unimpressed. Of course, until the mid-thirties anyway they could still have a "Dust Moped" or two, a few "Seagulls over Bermuda" could still be a little roughy and so on. This is where a lot of the

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Film, Television and Radio

AUSTRALIAN TV - A MESSY COMPROMISE?

Brian Bell

ARMED & DANGEROUS is an Australian Production with the Australian Broadcasting Commission's assistance, with a production company fully administrative and creative responsibilities. It has a long list of experienced writers for ABC TV, as do its script producers and directors, including many regulars. The script and director are: David Johnston. Based on Norman Lindsay's cartoon series for art.

Just as the Australian stage has been reluctant to establish an image of long borrowed then new, so too appears Brian Bell's *Armed & Dangerous* TV industry, in an article which presents a basis for future discussion of the process behind the medium.

Most of the television programmes transmitted in prime time in Australia are made for audiences in either Great Britain or the United States of America.

The Americans and the British both approach television in a way that is related to their contrasting ways of life and both produce good programmes.

What about Australia and Australian television? We live on the left — and spend millions of dollars a year to see American films.

Taping a scene at ABC TV's Power Without Glory in which John (John Hargrave) (Hargrave) appears to John (John Hargrave) (Hargrave).



We take a day off to celebrate the Queen's Birthday — and encourage the Americans to build up their forces in Vietnam and their naval strength in the Indian Ocean. We discuss controversial issues — but only in terms of attack and defence. We recognise and delight in our natural resources — and draw on outside capital and expertise to develop them.

Television here, like so many elements in our society, seems to be a messy compromise between Australian and British models.

On the one hand we set up long running series like *Mindful*, *Current*, *Women*, and *King of the Hill* without either the background of realist research and definition of social attitudes that underpins a programme's success, as a continuing and profitable product. Mission deposited on the feet of a single intuitive controller who can give the programme an immediacy a provocative particularity (Cairns).

On the other hand we take a simplifying idea, often limited and qualified in social or technical terms.

The trigger in the woodpile is "the Commission". In Australia this means the Executive of a commercial TV channel — or a group of Public Services at the ABC. For better or worse these committees have enormous influence. They not only assess programme ideas but check on changes to its production schedules and technique. Having no before-the-event market research and only the most general, and often conservative, definition of

BRITISH T.V.

British television is a step in a long march.

• Social commentators stretch from Joseph Addison through Samuel Johnson to Aldous Huxley, from Ben Jonson through Oscar Wilde to Alf Garnett and John Cleese. Popular serial storylines from *Chaucer* through *Dickens* and *Ensign* through to *Prison* *Masters* and *Red White*.

• Debate has always been a popular British sport and television quickly became a forum as worthy of persistent high standards of opinion as hardback, newspaper, and the corner pub.

• In Britain debate has always been more important than discussion and action.

• For instance when *Producers* integrity was questioned a cabinet minister's loyalty and vulnerability became matters of public debate. *Producers* resigned but debate continued academically, historically, politically, philosophically, philosophically and generally.

• When an idea for a television programme follows the British/English pattern is for senior members of a production organisation to consider it and if it is found acceptable, approach a writer or an expert with a commission and develop. The writer is expected to lead at the world around himself, clarity and style a one off play (David Mercer: *A Suitable Case for Treatment*) or lead with equal clarity at an established work and adapt it (Norman Redden: *The Pathfinders*) or contribute something of his own attitude to an episode of a running series (Nigel Jones, *Barrow at Large*). The expert gives research staff the nudging producer. Kenneth Clarke runs up with *Civilisation* — broadcast with *The Ascent of Man*.

• In Britain the production companies tend to throw their resources, staff and capital behind an idea or an expert and thus the results tend to be worthwhile.

• As British debate produces a spread of shades of opinion, so British television produces a large number of programmes covering a wide range of experience.

Over a period of 14 years, the BBC produced 66 episodes of *Shakespeare and I* — that was all the first, Gielgud and Simpson, had in their to write.

the audience. They rely on specialization and overseas models for programs. It would be interesting to know the number of program ideas — about worth the killing — that individuals and production companies like Crawford have presented to these committees only to see them disappear along with the script and the pilot.

The American attitude of developing a solidly-based, market-oriented product, and the British attitude of luck and hope in a program idea seem to be about as far apart as two ideas can get. No real program will likely result from a committee.

AMERICAN T.V.

■ American television is a step in a long march

■ The ability to adapt, process and market the resources of hard sciences from the pioneers through Rockefeller, Edison and Al Capone to DeLoe and Sam Martin, popular entrepreneurs struck from Mark Twain through W.C. Fields to Mary Tyler Moore

■ The least target of American culture has always been the working together of peoples drawn from all parts of the world — giving an artificially created nation a single aim, a single drive, a corporate identity

■ In America decision and action have always been more important than debate

■ (For instance, when Haldeman's integrity was questioned, public opinion burst into a barrage of attacks and accusations refuting the claim that a member of the President's Executive was directly involved with slush funds and dirty tricks. On his own terms public opinion turned Haldeman into an angry man in an un-American situation.)

■ When an idea for a television programme comes the normal American pattern is for the producers to get together with advertisers and network men to test the idea, check its marketability, develop it and set up the staff, facilities and capital to guarantee a long run.

■ In America an idea or script is "launched" by the producers, the advertisers and the network, and is carefully supervised by those responsible for its receipt throughout the production — maintaining the chances of future and maximizing the chances of profit.

■ As American knowhow and capital produces a vast number of consumer goods within a narrow range so American television produces a vast number of products on a limited number of themes.

■ After the American Film bought the formula and turned it into *Barford and Son*, they produced 266 episodes in 5 years.



"I'd like to help you Sonny, but like you can see . . . my hands are tied"

You insure yourself against failure by having one, but you also insure yourself against triumph.

Seldom do Australian television programmes hit where it hurts, or where it tickles. Perhaps this is inevitable. Perhaps our programmes lack precision and impact because our society itself lacks definition, lacks clear aims, is a compromise amalgam of attitudes and aspirations inherited from Great Britain and America. We like asking questions but prefer comfortable, rather than honest answers — so that *Daily and Percy*, *Stargazer*, and *K9* go to Asia don't even reach export.

We like national aims being spelled out but don't like being bound by them — so that our ideas only work when drilled and laid, cops are nice and psychology is allowed only a token nod.

But is it true that Australian television is

by country *EQUITY* NEWSPAPER (July 7 '76) nothing more than a modest compromise of American and British models? Isn't there anything anywhere on our screen that suggests particular and individual themes, attitudes and forms that speak directly and provocatively to the audience and therefore develop their own particular production systems and styles?

Yes well. *Murder 101* and *Norman Gunston* have an individuality which knit together questions without answers, problems without revealing perspectives, and all in an obscure informal vulgar way that is in tune with other popular Australian entertainments: the theme restaurants, Reg Williams's *Flash Harry* novels — David Williamson's plays *The Legends of King O'Malley*. No Norman Lindsay's novels and cartoons. C.J. Dennis. Henry Lawson.



ABC TV film crew shooting a scene of *Certain Women* with Ren Graham as Alan Stone and Rex O'Rourke as Steve

Theatre-In-Education

TIE-ING UP AUSTRALIA

Margaret Leask

MARGARET LEASK is the Information Officer for the Australian Youth Performing Arts Association and was Australia's representative at the 1975 International Young People's Theatre Conference in Bonn, Berlin. A former editor of the *Blackburn Theatre Youth* magazine, she is also present coordinator of the National Playhouse Conference.

The Australian Youth Performing Arts Association, which was established in 1974, is also organising resource information activity based in the Australian Blackboard Theatre Trust with branches and representatives at each state. The main purpose is to provide a communication network for all people working in the performing arts for youth — kids teachers, directors, actors, writers etc. At present we have a consultant travelling throughout Australia talking to teachers and professional groups and individuals — the aim being to find out the facilities, problems and needs in this field. Emerging from this is a basic need for some material for people to work on. We are investigating ways of publishing things — by that I mean making them accessible. We have to find inexpensive ways of producing multiple copies. AYPA is a member of the international association (ASSTIE), which has similar aims and own I attended a Conference last year in East Berlin and made very aware that most European countries have an enormous amount of children's theatres and plays. But that people do not really relate to our audiences — partly because many are based on folk tales and traditions alien to us and partly because the tradition and experience of theatregoing is different to ours. Australian children have a persistent lack of television which influences their responses as a theatre audience. Above haven't really a heritage of children's literature.

I feel very strongly children's theatre should be trying to do something like television can't do — otherwise there is not much point in doing it.

Most companies working for young people are involved in one or more of the following activities: firstly, the workshop situation with kids and/or tutors devising their own songs, which may not be acceptable in conventional theatre terms but they are relevant statements. They tend to be largely improvised and often not written down with all their subtleties.

Secondly, holiday weekend, performance type productions and it seems that only

amateur theatres do this now as few major companies find it worth their while. It can be very expensive to mount a full production which only runs at weekends at school holidays.

And finally, Theatre in education. The documentary and social comment style seems at present the most exciting form and is probably, as is the case in England, truly experimental theatre. It appears at this time of protest, that until the actor/teachers have worked together for a while, they need time to pull together the research, ideas and attitudes and the theatrical elements, to make it a lively and imaginative statement.

TIE is fairly new in Australia — until recently only Regional Theatre were working in this area and there are only a few people experienced in presenting theatre as relevant way to school audiences.

There is a need for writers and actors with a commitment to this area and a willingness to research historical and social material to be able to work with a company. It is no good however, making performance in schools like a slightly diluted lecture — it has to be different from what the teacher can do while at the same time being aware of how the teacher can extend the experience in future lessons. Many companies prepare follow up material for teachers so awareness grows that a theatrical statement is not very effective in isolation from the past and future experiences of the audience for whom it is intended.

I don't want to oversell the impression that in disregarding the formal theatre experience for young people — it should go hand in hand with the drama and theatre in education experience — as long as it's relevant and doesn't cheat on the magical three dimensional elements of theatre — and that's the problem as present — very few plays for children (mostly from overseas) are relevant, and in theatrical terms there is still the attitude that second best is okay for children — that they don't know the difference — but I think they do!

The following national description of some of the groups working in Australia — is not possible to include them all but to discuss that of activity is going on mainly coordinated by a small number of committed enthusiasts — somewhat out of the mainstream of theatrical activity. There is a very little recognition in this country that people working in the performing arts for young people are effectively a combination of creative artists and educationalists.

In Western Australia children's Activities Bureau offers a combination of creative arts activities and they also visit schools occasionally. Little Rock Theatre, do performances for children in holiday. The National Theatre of the Playhouse conduct

youth workshops and have taken productions into schools and country areas. The Western Australian Institute of Technology have a student group — Theatre go-round — which does productions.

In N.S.W. there is the Australian Theatre for Young People attached to the Old Tote Theatre company. For some time they did holiday productions of things like *The Cowardly Lion* and *Pinocchio* but they found it too expensive and audiences appear has lessened. Now they have two TIE teams working in schools and also conduct workshops for young people regularly. Regional Theatre has been touring



A school audience watching the Tarragona P.A.T. team presenting a history of Australian Youth Theatre (above).

schools for about 11 years with programmes devised especially for the company. They work with other short companies with the actors encouraging contributions from the students at their dramatic and musical poetry and prose being studied by students. The company aims sets up certain logical steps towards a possible ending with the kids filling in the blanks. The Independent Theatre presents regular Saturday matinees for young audiences. In productions of the kind music plays an important part — often familiar tunes with new words add variety to the performance. Miriam Street Theatre is similar to the Independent — they conduct workshops and devise and have holiday seasons — often at puppet shows. Also, Activities in Newtown works in the creative arts area and Summer Student Theatre began recently at the new Sydney Centre in Sydney where students work for two to three months at the end of their



It'll be in on that by Anna Mayday. The team includes Lyn Bennett, Ann Weather Dooling and Joyce Sanders and are attached to the Tasmanian Theatre Company.

academic year on expanding a script — moving in a production.

In South Australia the Adelaide Festival Centre has a TIE team at least the South Australian Theatre Company based at the Playhouse. Another TIE team is Ties, based at a primary school, but touring weekly. Perth Theatre is a puppet theatre which can live performers as well, as does the Reporting Company.

In Tasmania besides the Tasmanian Theatre at Education Centre attached to the Tasmanian Theatre Company, there are a number of South Theatre who do not work with TIE and present youth productions.

In Western Australia's Arts Theatre group at schools, with audience participation programmes and plays for young people.

The Australian Children's Theatre run by Joan and Betty Rayner was the pioneer in

Australia in this field. The Rayners were mainly entrepreneurial programmes — such as Richard Goodwin's Shadow Puppets. The Melbourne Theatre Company has a number of TIE teams and conducts youth workshops. Other groups in Victoria working in TIE include the Drama Resource Centre, the Magic Mushroom Music Troupe and Cariboo.

In Queensland there are some very active groups. The Queensland Theatre Company has presented some excellent TIE programmes. Twelfth Night Theatre recently appointed a Youth Director and they conduct workshops, present miniatures and run a TIE project called Early Childhood Project for young school children. They are involved in a project taking a Children's Theatre director from Germany to direct a production (one later this year) because being short on writers we also lack directors in this field.

The main amateur theatres Arts Theatre and La Dolce also present children's plays and in the Northern Territory there is an active theatre in education/drama in education group based at Darwin's Main Community Arts Centre.

Throughout Australia there are groups working for young audiences seeking talented script, ideas and people committed to the task. However the difficulty in Australia to Children's Theatre has largely been that it is the poor country cousin. Actors, theatre companies, directors, funding sources and touring schools usually see children's theatre as a stepping stone into adult theatre or as a filler job until you're needed. Attitude to writing is similar — there are little financial or critical rewards — so why bother!

I do believe if you're going to have an audience tomorrow you have to give them interesting theatre experiences now — before they find alternative leisure activities. Writers must be encouraged — without being led to think that a good way to learn the craft is by knocking out a few children's plays. It must be as good as adult theatre, if not better!



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE— INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

The International Theatre Institute was chartered by UNESCO in 1948 to 'Promote the exchange of knowledge and practice in the Theatre Arts'. Given interests were represented at this first meeting in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Today ITI Centres exist in seventy countries around the world, with a central office at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

The ITI in Australia is situated at 123 Darling Street, Rose Park on the second floor of the International Theatre Trust building. It offers the use of a small but quite comprehensive theatre library which includes plays (mostly Australian), magazines from all over the world and technical books on stage design, lighting etc.

Every three months it lists and prints in 'Australian Theatre Landscape' all Australian

Premieres and Australian plays presented around Australia.

Once every six months the Sydney Office sends information about Australian Premieres to Paris for inclusion in the magazine International Theatre Informations which has a worldwide circulation twice a year. For this reason we send a green form to all theatres presenting premiere performances so that they complete and return for the filing and reference necessary. In this regard we also endeavour to keep a file for historical reference on the development of Australian theatre and its writers.

The Sydney office is authorised to present ITI cards to practising professionals from the various areas of the theatre arts for their convenience when travelling abroad. This assures them of immediate contact with

people in the theatrical scene in any of the seventy countries they may wish to visit. With this card it also gives an address list of all the ITI Centres — which makes it possible to more efficiently find out any information which may be required to perform, produce, teach, schools etc. By this same system we in Sydney extend the same courtesy to visiting travellers introducing them to theatres, Australian plays and people. The ITI language questionnaire in each of the States who are in constant contact with the Sydney office and are willing to be involved in all theatrical events, particularly those which include the development of Australian theatre. They are in Melbourne — Garin Huchinson, David Austin, Margaret Day, Tasmania: David Large, A.C.T. Brian Hoast, Queensland: Arlene Salas and Western Australia: Margo Lake.

Technical

TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE THEATRE TECHNOLOGY

Darryl Wilkinson
Ian McKenzie

IAN MCKENZIE has been a member of the Australian Performing Group since its formation. A photographer, lighting designer, and film maker, he has been a guest of technical staff in many theatres, and has been a member of the Australian Performing Group since its formation. A photographer, lighting designer, and film maker, he has been a guest of technical staff in many theatres, and has been a member of the Australian Performing Group since its formation.

The work towards the discovery of Alternative Theatre Technology is linked with the legacies of Procession and the work of the Australian Performing Group. What normally we would be wary of practitioners supplying solutions to the problems of alternative theatre, it seems at the moment that

experience of its problems is limited to those people. Those traditional theatre people thrust into the environment of alternative theatre often do not understand its many staging problems.

Alternative theatre is not flexible by nature, but must become so in order to be accessible to the audience. The difference between alternative theatre and processional work is essentially proximity so that the perspective of the production is total and not indirectly enhanced via related stages, changing borders, and other John/Yellow Back Road techniques.

There is a movement away from the old theatre of illusion towards a theatre of honesty where the machinery of production is unashamedly exposed. The traditional roles of those involved have to be re-examined — for example the role of the designer changes from that of producing an essentially two-dimensional picture frame, setting out of a three-dimensional environment which involves not only actor, but audience with actor, thus heightening dramatic

communication. Freeing the actor from the power of the procession and, however, puts the technical staff into their own power. Because this scene has been essentially removed, alternative theatre rules must heavily on Sound and Light to create atmosphere.

The traditional prompt corner with its unobstructed and unobscured view of the stage is gone, leading to loss of stage context and therefore, loss of stage context. For this reason, everyone in an alternative theatre production needs to rethink their role. Actors need to be more responsible for props and costumes and possible set changes, while the production, arch, designer, lines of action, responsibility is much less obvious. The role of the Stage Manager can be converted into the 'language' of procession with theatre by the use of such things as Closed Circuit TV for overall stage view, to cue actor, light and sound, but this is perhaps an unattractive expense. One alternative proposed with them is to use a light rig and operator to follow the show through all rehearsals as a

Darryl Wilkinson, aboard the 'cherry picker', adjusts a screen at the OPEX 57400, State College.



Ian McKenzie decompresses the Stuart 3420 rehearsal control desk in studios at the State College, Vic.



part of the cast. So well do they know the show with that total involvement that if an actor drops a glass of wine! this is immediately reacted to. No place here for the cynic who protests. Period. A on the call and goes back to the novel. A Stage Manager at the Point is only used to fulfil functions where a high degree of mobility is required or there is a lack of time for actors to perform these functions. The lighting and sound operators are quite possibly part of the audience or at least in full view.

As taste changes, so do the technical needs. Technical equipment must be flexible to cope with these needs, but we have enhanced the equipment that our own training from the practitioners such theatre, and there is no sign of a new generation of equipment, although there is, fortunately, a new generation of alternative theatre technical staff.

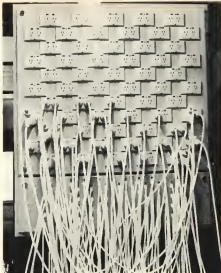
Solutions to these new problems are rarely easy to find. Off the shelf, and usually involve large amounts of expenditure and time. This article is therefore an inevitable plea for someone to re-design equipment for the alternative theatre stage.

Firstly, let us look at sound equipment. We need a QUET type deck, as reliable as the REVOX or PERRODGRAPH, but without the relay noises which require soundproofing of several rooms quietly to shut them up! These machines cannot, at present, be used in an audience area. Speaker systems also are an obvious problem for the alternative theatre. Instead of having permanent, balanced speaker systems glued to the practitioners' front we have the permanent problem of where to place those portable, six cubic feet enclosures so that they don't perform poorly. Individuals who happen to be in the immediate vicinity. The better - expensive solution is the 1/4 mile of speaker connecting wires which have been carefully taped to the lighting grid over the last four years. Productions - inevitably left behind when the speakers are shifted yet again to a totally new location. What might perhaps be ideal would be a speaker patch system similar to a lighting patch system which could carry up to, say, 12 connections but effective speakers on the lighting grid without undue pickup of unwanted 'thump' buzz. For low budget theatre this could be a couple of speakers and 12 patch points - for the Space in Adelaide a couple of 12 BOGA 800's pointing DOWN from three points overhead.

Which leads to a few comments on lighting and lighting control. The primary factor which affects lighting design on the alternative theatre stage is the requirement to light for audiences on at least three sides, thus requiring approximately three times the equipment needed to light the same show on the practitioners' arch stage.

To get light on any part of the stage area with maximum accuracy we need a grid system totally removed from the concept of P40 1, 2 and 3 bars. Basically we agree that one more grid is absolutely necessary. We need more patch houses about the method of lighting in such a one metre grid. But we are certainly agreed that the overhead concept in its present form is both unbearably expensive and totally inefficient. It is not good enough to be boring. Hence in the wooden catwalks of fixed new flexible theatres in order to be able to position lanterns properly!

An absolutely efficient ceiling with the grid immediately under it is needed in a large or exceptionally so, rooms which will stop actors' voices vanishing into some vast black void. Access can be obtained to the grid from



Parrot Pan of Spaghetti 1 - at the OPEN STAGE Melbourne

a small cherry picker. Hydraulic hoist which travels rapidly around the three carrying one person and about 20 lanterns and is stopped only by floor mechanisms such as sailing (which can of course be easily shifted).

Another system of access is to have a travelling catwalk (as a travelling crane in a larder) which runs on rails to sit on the walls of the theatre UNDER the grid, enabling the person rigging to roll up and down and walk from side to side to reach any point in the theatre then to hang and aim the lantern at each height. Lanterns would be stored in the hoist and the traveller itself would be parked in a slot in the side wall of the hoist when not in use. However not to invent to create a 254-ton affair (proposed in your guts is the deal) it could be used a whole generation of lighting people with normal length arms.

To back up the grid is a comprehensive system of patch points terminating in a permanent patch panel with each reduction bar in a glance whereas those a power going into the lamp cabinet and therefore wherever that deal is to the lamp or the fuse.

Lastly, a drive in the direction of lighting control. The currently designed and for practitioners such theatre, highly efficient

Sound 9P 40 180 series is far too constraining for really application in the area of highly mobile theatre of which we are speaking. For the Point, for example, initially motivated by lack of money but subsequently by more ideological concerns with flexibility, we constructed a 20 channel 1 main board (2R per channel) which has A and B rotating Master blackout on each panel. The ability to handle any channel and can still be used from a post in the audience. We are at present designing a 40 channel board with the same specifications, and believe of minimization the physical size should stay within the audience area limitations. It will have a capacity of 35 channels at 2K and 5 at 5K.

The cost of production of the 40 channel board will be approximately \$1,500, including labour costs. Surely there is an electronics manufacturer who can supply comparable elements in Australia at a reasonable price.

The basic level of the flexible alternative theatre must surely be that anything is possible. For each time a new production is mounted a new theatre is constructed in the shell of the building, a body for the life which is the play.

We must have the generosity to supply it. We build.

Opera

AUSTRALIAN OPERA

SYDNEY OPERA SEASON

David Gyger

The days are long gone when it was even remotely up to directorial grand opera as an art form, while today it is all about drama and staging, even for men to nothing. Many of those who aren't today but that long since have, instead, make the equally drastic mistake of thinking the theatre that opera is merely drama with incidental music and therefore musical considerations ought always to be subordinate to drama to credibility.

Both extremes are, of course, hardly wrong, opera is a legitimate art form in its own right and was in the past in the 18th, 19th, and even to some extent the 20th. The theatre is all right to be quite right to deny the occasional musical — all production that will come up today with all the traditional absurdities — the last, ungraciously opera whose "acting" consists of throwing in a few unconvincing human gestures and those of the planned ballet school, who never move anything but a throat muscle, the decision with traditional works presented traditionally, the absence of anything even remotely relevant to the action track. But on the other hand some of the worst opera disasters one could ever fear to see have emanated from theatre directors — often with excellent established reputations — who produce an opera as if it were drama pure and simple.

The classic bad example is the metaphor opera producer who tries to require a principal to sing lying flat on the back while smoking a cigarette. It just can't be done. But it is always possible to pace operatic action as one might like musical considerations almost always dictate how fast lines can be delivered and it is a simple fact that one can not sing words comprehensibly as rapidly as one can speak them. Further the composer lays down the speed at which his music should be performed. Sometimes one can get away with judicious cutting, but one can never, say speed up the action by playing the notes as written but twice as fast. Many operas, in particular those of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, are intrinsically worse to be slowed — even halved in — rather than to be dashed through or hurried along so one can catch a inter or even saving overtime to the audience in the pit.

Five operas including three productions new to Sydney were performed in the first month of the current four-month, 100-performance season of the Australian Opera at the Sydney Opera House. Only two reviews are of works that have sufficient interest merit to have earned themselves unquestioned status in the so-called standard repertory — Verdi's *Agathe und Struwwelpeter* and Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. The plot of *Agathe* may be as silly and ridiculous as they come, but it has some of the most popular tunes in all opera and a score few hear just for the hell of it but

the most popular. *Rosenkavalier* is admittedly long-winded and excessively static most of the time, but it features some of the most interesting orchestral writing, and some of the most gloriously beautiful solo female voices that have ever been composed — in particular, the famous trio of the first act.

In my respect who this year's revival of *Der Rosenkavalier* is a patch of opening in the 1972 original produced by Berndt Schenck, designed by Tom Longwell and conducted by Edward Domett. The fault was partly attributable to Longwell, turned producer for this staging, and partly to William Reed's conducting, which at opening at least was far from its authentic and meticulous as was Domett.

But far more of the trouble came because of the differences in casting of the four central characters; only one was played by the same performer who originally sang the role. This was the Baron Duke of Red Warren Smith, which is even more distressing than it was in 1972: really, another dramatically

unpleasantly rustic.

But an opening night show like *Agathe* is not a bad thing, especially the quality and the perfection of the Marchand, a role so capably created by Rosemary Gordon in the original. Margareta Olsson was far from convincing in the difficult lowball (silly) day, important noblesman role of Octavian, so definitely created by Yvonne Martin. Though the singing was well, and the role of the Sophie, though dramatically excellent, was hardly really here and there then. Clara Fowler, original Abta, a month, all three had improved markedly as had the orchestral realization of the score.

Only a couple of days into the season, Carlo Felice Ciferri proved that Sydney Orchestra was still capable of distinction by conducting a fine musical performance of *Agathe* the starring Raymond Mayers in the title role, John Benfield as Duke, Reginald Rivers as the Duke, Donald Sherwin as Sordani and Lesley Standish as Modigliani. But the fault in John Ciferri's original 1972 production do not quite live with repeated warnings in particular, the structural and incongruous relationship of the opening scene and the reversed scenes of the second scene that presents Duke from running joyously into her father's arms as the music demands, but the famous quartet of the first act has the season for the first time found standing relations with the addition of Miss Standish to the cast.

For and away the most successful of the three new productions seen during the month is that of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* by producer George Dillier and designer Kenneth Hutchinson of the South Australian Theatre Company. Unlike many a drama director during his first in opera, Dillier conceded he was dealing with a new art form,



Australian Opera's *The Cunning Little Vixen* by Jernard



The Australian Opera's *The Abolition* from the *Senjago* (Museum)

not merely drama with music, whose evidence could be seen of his hand at work. It was always clear to me that his was a positive influence and not merely a makeshift one. But he tried on the side of making things too easy for the singers, thus leaving some quite dull patches if his late his hand got near some of the pickles as *opera*, the results may well prove to be superb.

Delius's particular success in this *Senjago* was with David Sivinski (as Darius) who seemed to be unfettered throughout for the first time on stage and produced a thoroughly comic performance. He and the two women provided the vocal highlights. Joan Carter in superb form as Calanthe and Jane Bonhill as afterwards. Darius, gave the singing in respect to the orchestra good reason for her stage vocal deliverance. Naturally the production was under the firm yet sensitive control of Carlo Pelizz. Collins.

Collins also produced a musically good version of Lesy Janak's *The Curing Little* (seen here to Sydney but presented earlier in the year in Melbourne) a re-creation by Jonathan Miller of his recent English production at Glyndebourne using Rosemary Troops original costumes. Brian Hammer's Men and Robert Almen's Foreigner were superbly sung and acted as was Ron Stevens Fox and in a slightly lower level Ronald Doves Schumacher and Dag, but the children in the cast were full effective and it was a mistake to telescope the three acts and produce 90 minutes of what would expect to be an unfamiliar, sometimes hard to grasp work. Despite its ideologically topical message, the *Men* is probably impossible to stage credibly in the 1970s because of its odd mixture of

animal and human characters and its sometimes quaintly old-fashioned morality, yet it deserves an occasional airing for its likeable subtle musical score.

Within the limits imposed by the nature of the work itself the performers of Norman Ayrton's new production of *Delius* (shown on July 10) was a success. Joan Sutherland was vocally planning and dramatically adequate in the title role, of course, but Clifford Grier's Melanthe was not on her heels in terms of overall impact — magnificently actualising with a richness of tone then extended right through the range.

Norm Widen's *Delius* was at its best when blending vocally with Miss Sutherland, at other times his tone was too harsh and forced her acting woman. Margaret Lawrence acquitted herself superbly as Melanthe in a little pre-season warm up for her debut at Carina three weeks later.

Richard Berwick had the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra under excellent control in this too often badly changing score which was married superbly in Desmond Delly's costuming and designs. Lamentably of toping in assistance of Oriental beauty. Yet nothing can disguise the stark weaknesses of *Lebor* whose plot is very thin and whose music is all too often pedestrian and only fairly suited, and there were a few notable production lapses, such as a disastrously an Indian baller in the second act, a totally unimpressive swim dive by Gerald after he was stabbed and the handling of the beach of the baroque episode in act one, which required Miss Sutherland to turn laborer and wretch of back into passion after the departure of the English intruders.



Australian Opera's *Lebor*

Books

PICTURES & PLAYS

Helen van der Poorten

The New York Stage, Famous Productions in Photographs, ed. Stanley Appelbaum
Dance Publications Inc. (N.Y. 1975)
Recommended retail price \$5.95
Australian Edition, by David Forbush
Lan Downey Sydney 1978
Recommended retail price \$6.50
The Currency Lens, by Edward Goghegan, ed. Roger Cowell
Curry Matthews Drama Pty Ltd. Sydney 1978
Recommended retail price \$4.95

Considering that the "here today gone tomorrow" aspects of theatre are the main thing that the art form has going for it, it is curious how much we like to collect tangible evidence of literary moments in the theatre. Several online publishers' interest is to do this.

One in David Forbush's new photographic collection titled *Australian Stage!* Contained very much with the theatrical moment of movement. Forbush has photographed both contemporary and classical ballet dancing all over the country for the past two years. The result is a collection of lively photographs. Forbush wants us in his introduction that his sketch for what is usually striking will sometimes lead him towards what is "historically ungrounded" and that good beliefs may be at times photographically before him. In fact the spectacle of Don Quixote and a Fidei Mei Garden are images (the latter while the photographs of more dynamic moments capture the instant of action). The Trolley Boy's, Glenda, Peter & Aye, and Deborah's Children of Time almost move.

This body is Forbush's main subject, so he includes some visually interesting shots of Ballet Victoria. His major recurring theme is that of physical pain and torment caused to dancers by their art. The photographs of Katie's Plaque and Holger's in *Perseus* (Hog) go some way towards explaining why he dedicated his book to those artists who have

suffered later in life from joint degeneration in their daily dancing.

For Robert Holger, in his Foreword to Australian Ballet, captures the intensity of contemporary dance in three, supporting this Forbush's photographic approach is the idea is a useful substitute for the artist's sentiment. In fact if there is one major fault with this book it is in the anecdotal, self-congratulatory tags to the photographs. John Butler gives us an abbreviated my life in Art, and Morancy tells us that to dance together you have to communicate with each other. Heidy (Hilmar) and the comments do not usually enhance the photographs. Forbush's introduction for important figures in the dance scene also leads him to fill in going so much space to the Russian dancers Bolshoi and Makarov. The photographs of their past are also the least interesting in the book.

These are noticeable features of a book, however, which celebrates the dancer in his moment of creative pain. Even the most hardened ballroomer will be moved by the visual beauty of the reproductions of the movies.

Stanley Appelbaum takes in the introduction to *The New York Stage* that people have been collecting drawings, programs and prints of performances since the theatre began. He devotes his book to the work of those more recent recorders, theatrical photographers, and reproduces 148 photographs of New York productions from 1883 to 1935. Theatrical photography at first served the quite utilitarian purpose of providing publicity for the scene can forget about buying this book for the study of the photos themselves.

As the 50 year period roughly spans the decline of the Picture Palace phenomenon, such theatre, Appelbaum has chosen fully frontal shots of scenes framed by the proscenium. The point of view is limited so many of the scenes are static — *Shirley Holmes* holds his pipe and Morancy glances for

distance in two dimensional pictures caught at the very moment.

In spite of this the book is valuable and the photographs are impressively reproduced and for the student of theatre design, the book illustrates the stage and its variations of the plotted scene. The record of changing styles within that stage is also to be found there, and Appelbaum includes most of the major O'Neill productions, from the naturalistic early plays to more experimental and experimental ones. The sets for *The Emperor Jones* and *Desiree* are especially interesting.

As a source of pleasure the book is adequate as it stands, with its careful listing of the photographs and brief captions about the play the designers and the actors. But as a unique source for the student it could be more exploratory. The chronological arrangement of the plays is the problem. It is also strange why to know more about any the productions of David Belasco and the designs of Lee Simonson (even so one grateful for having ready access to these photographs) have been further included in the Museum of the City of New York.

Curry Matthews Drama record the theatrical past through a non-visual medium, most in the last of the *Matthews Drama Series*. Roger Cowell edits *The Currency Lens* from which the publishers devote their theme is comedy written by correct playwright Edward Goghegan and produced in 1944. This is without doubt the most beautiful of Curry Matthews' publications to date. With its coloured reproductions of early Sydney as drawings, costumes and edited musical score it is a pleasure to handle and read.

Accused of plagiarism, Edward Goghegan nevertheless gained the reputation of being the first popular Australian playwright and *The Currency Lens* is at least a original. Even though as Professor Cowell admits it is "the major piece" the play is an amusing manner 19th Century comedy with a colonial flavour. However in *Just Street Theatre* in 1956, the play revolves around the mistaken notion that "native" Australian girls are dark of skin a subject which Cowell observes may offend in 1976.

In its original performance *The Currency Lens* proved feelings of violent protest in the audience, but it is hard to find such excitement in it now. The Stage between Larry O'Leary must be one of the most tedious of his kind, and the role of the Currency Lens (which demands intensely unlikely to be found in the amateur group which might take up this play).

The National Theatre Series is committed to placing our drama in its historical context, and certainly the editor presents a lively picture of Sydney theatre in the 1940s. His chapter on "Edward Goghegan and his Actors is brief but entertaining as a piece of theatrical criticism.



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Next Month

Stanley White looks at the Music Hall and the
many actors who lived the night there.

Tom Meier plants up the Catch-22 of modernity,
beginning a debate to continue in future issues.
Edi Rabinovich takes a general view of the way
forward to Australian Theatre presented.

PLUS Melbourne reviews and our regular
short stories.

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(P = Facing)